Drusilla Wahl Pierce

THE MEMOIRS OF

JACQUES CASANOVA

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF NOW FOR
THE FIRST TIME TRANSLATED INTO
ENGLISH IN TWELVE VOLUMES

VOLUME FIVE

PRIVATELY PRINTED
FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

Privately Printed for Subscribers Only.
Edition strictly limited to 750 sets on Albion laid deckle-edge paper and 50 sets on Crocker Japan Vellum.

Printed from type and type distributed.

CONTENTS

Chapter I

PAGE

Count Tiretta of Trevisa—Abbé Coste—Lambertini, the Pope's niece—Her nickname for Tiretta—The aunt and niece—Our talk by the fireside—Punishment of Damien—Tiretta's mistake—Anger of Madame * * * —Their reconciliation—My happiness with Mdlle. de la Meure—Silva's daughter—Mdlle. de la Meure marries—My despair and jealousy—A change for the better 1

Chapter II

The Abbé de la Ville—The Abbé Galiani—The Neapolitan dialect—I set out for Dunkirk on a secret mission—I succeed—I return to Paris by Amiens—My adventures by the way—M. de la Bretonnière—My report gives satisfaction—I am paid five hundred louis—Reflections . . . 74

Chapter III . .

The Count de la Tour d'Auvergne and Madame d'Urfé—Camille—My passion for the count's mistress, the ridiculous incident which cured me—The Count de St. Germain 101

Chapter IV

PAGE

Absurd ideas of Madame d'Urfé on my supernatural powers—Marriage of my brother—I conceive a plan on his wedding-day—I go to Holland on a financial mission—The Jew, Boaz, give me a lesson—M. d'Afri—Esther—Another Casanova—I find Thérèse Imer again . . 132

Chapter V

My fortune in Holland—My return to Paris with young Pompeati 168

Chapter VI

I meet with a flattering reception from my patron—Madame d'Urfé's infatuation—Madame X. C. V. and her family—Madame du Rumain . . 209

Chapter VII

I continue my relations with Mdlle. X. C. V.—Vain attempts to procure abortion—The aroph—She flies from home and takes refuge in a convent 248

Chapter VIII

Fresh adventures—J. J. Rousseau—I set up a business—Castel-Bajac—A lawsuit is commenced against me—M. de Sartine 290

Chapter IX

PAGE

My examination—I give the clerk three hundred louis—The midwife and Castel-Bajac imprisoned —Mdlle. X. C. V. is brought to bed of a son, and obliges her mother to make me amends—The suit against me is quashed—Mdlle. X. C. V. goes with her mother to Brussels, and from thence to Venice, where she becomes a great lady—My work-girls—Madame Baret—I am robbed, put in prison, and set at liberty again—I go to Holland —Helvetius' "Esprit"—Piccolomini . . . 311

Chapter X

Portrait of the pretended Countess Piccolomini—Quarrel and duel—Esther and her father, M. d'O. —Esther still taken with the cabala—Piccolomini forges a bill of exchange: results—I am fleeced, and in danger of being assassinated—Debauch with the two Paduan girls—I reveal a great secret to Esther—I baffle the rascally St. Germain: his flight—Manon Baletti proves faithless to me: her letter announcing her marriage: my despair—Esther spends a day with me—My portrait, and my letters to Manon, get into Esther's hands—I pass a day with her —We talk of marrying each other . . . 359

MEMOIRS

OF

JACQUES CASANOVA

CHAPTER I

COUNT TIRETTA OF TREVISA—ABBÉ COSTE—LAMBERTINI, THE POPE'S NIECE—HER NICK-NAME FOR TIRETTA—THE AUNT AND NIECE—OUR TALK BY THE FIRESIDE—PUNISHMENT OF DAMIEN—TIRETTA'S MISTAKE—ANGER OF MADAME * * *—THEIR RECONCILIATION—MY HAPPINESS WITH MDLLE. DE LA MEURE—SILVIA'S DAUGHTER—MDLLE. DE LA MEURE MARRIES—MY DESPAIR AND JEALOUSY A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

In the beginning of March, 1757, I received a letter from my friend Madame Manzoni, which she sent to me by a young man of good appearance, with a frank and high-born air, whom I recognized as a Venetian by his accent. He was young Count Tiretta

de Trevisa, recommended to my care by Madame Manzoni, who said that he would tell me his story, which I might be sure would be a true one. The kind woman sent to me by him a small box in which she told me I should find all my manuscripts, as she did not think she would ever see me again.

I gave Tiretta the heartiest of welcomes, telling him that he could not have found a better way to my favour than through a woman to whom I was under the greatest obligations.

"And now, that you may be at your ease with me, I should like to know in what manner I can be of service to you?"

"I have need of your friendship, perhaps of your purse, but at any rate of your protection."

"You have my friendship and my protection already, and my purse is at your service."

After expressing his gratitude to me, Tiretta said,—

"A year ago the Supreme Council of my country entrusted me with an employment dangerous to one of my years. I was made, with some other young gentlemen of my own age, a keeper of the Mont de Piété. The pleasures of the carnival having put us to a good deal of expense, we were short of money, and borrowed from the till hoping to be able to make up the money before balancing-day, but hoping all in vain.

"The fathers of my two companions, richer than

mine, paid the sums they had taken, and I, not being able to pay, took the part of escaping by flight from the shame and the punishment I should have undergone.

"Madame Manzoni advised me to throw myself on your mercy, and she gave me a little box which you shall have to-day. I only got to Paris yesterday, and have only two louis, a little linen, and the clothes on my back. I am twenty-five, have an iron constitution, and a determination to do all in my power to make an honest living; but I can do nothing. I have not cultivated any one talent in a manner to make use of it now. I can play on the flute, but only as an amateur. I only know my own language, and I have no taste for literature. So what can you make of me? I must add that I have not a single expectation, least of all from my father, for to save the honour of the family he will be obliged to sell my portion of the estate, to which I shall have to bid an eternal farewell."

If the count's story had surprised me, the simplicity with which he told it had given me pleasure; and I was resolved to do honour to Madame Manzoni's introduction, feeling that it was my duty to serve a fellow-countryman, who was really guilty of nothing worse than gross thoughtlessness.

"Begin," said I, "by bringing your small belongings to the room next to mine, and get your meals there. I will pay for everything while I am looking

out for something which may do for you.

"We will talk of business to-morrow, for as I never dine here I rarely if ever come home till late, and I do not expect to have the honour of seeing you again to-day. Leave me for the present, as I have got some work to do; and if you go out to walk, beware of bad company, and whatever you do keep your own counsel. You are fond of gaming, I suppose?"

"I hate it, as it has been the cause of half my troubles."

"And the other half, I'll wager, was caused by women."

"You have guessed aright—oh, those women!"

"Well, don't be angry with them, but make them pay for the ill they have done you."

"I will, with the greatest pleasure, if I can."

"If you are not too particular in your goods, you will find Paris rich in such commodities."

"What do you mean by particular? I would never be a prince's pathic."

"No, no, I was not thinking of that. I mean by 'particular' a man who cannot be affectionate unless he is in love. The man who. . . ."

"I see what you mean, and I can lay no claim to such a character. Any hag with golden eyes will always find me as affectionate as a Celadon."

"Well said! I shall soon be able to arrange matters for you."

"I hope you will."

"Are you going to the ambassador's?"

"Good God!—no! What should I do when I got there? Tell him my story? He might make things unpleasant for me."

"Not without your going to see him, but I expect he is not concerning himself with your case."

"That's all I ask him."

"Everybody, my dear count, is in mourning in Paris, so go to my tailor's and get yourself a black suit. Tell him you come from me, and say you want it by to-morrow. Good bye."

I went out soon after, and did not come back till midnight. I found the box which Madame Manzoni had sent me in my room, and in it my manuscripts and my beloved portraits, for I never pawned a snuff-box without taking the portrait out.

Next day Tiretta made his appearance all in black, and thanked me for his transformation.

"They are quick, you see, at Paris. It would have taken a week at Trevisa."

"Trevisa, my dear fellow, is not Paris."

As I said this, the Abbé de la Coste was announced. I did not know the name, but I gave orders for him to be admitted; and there presently appeared the same little priest with whom I had dined at Versailles after leaving the Abbé de la Ville.

After the customary greetings he began by com-

plimenting me on the success of my lottery, and then remarked that I had distributed tickets for more than six thousand francs.

"Yes," I said, "and I have tickets left for several thousands more."

"Very good, then I will invest a thousand crowns in it."

"Whenever you please. If you call at my office you can choose the numbers."

"No, I don't think I'll trouble to do so; give me any numbers just as they come."

"Very good; here is the list you can choose from."

He chose numbers to the amount of three thousand francs, and then asked me for a piece of paper to write an acknowledgment.

"Why so? I can't do business that way, as I only dispose of my tickets for cash."

"But you may be certain that you will have the money to-morrow."

"I am quite sure I should, but you ought to be certain that you will have the tickets to-morrow. They are registered at my office, and I can dispose of them in no other manner."

"Give me some which are not registered."

"Impossible; I could not do it."

"Why not?"

"Because if they proved to be winning num-

bers I should have to pay out of my own pocket—an honour I do not desire."

"Well, I think you might run the risk."

"I think not, if I wish to remain an honest man, at all events."

The abbé, who saw he could get nothing out of me, turned to Tiretta, and began to speak to him in bad Italian, and at last offered to introduce him to Madame de Lambertini, the widow of one of the Pope's nephews. Her name, her relationship to the Pope, and the abbé's spontaneous offer, made me curious to know more, so I said that my friend would accept his offer, and that I would have the honour to be of the party; whereupon we set out.

We got down at the door of the supposed niece of the Holy Father in the Rue Christine, and we proceeded to go upstairs. We saw a woman who, despite her youthful air, was, I am sure, not a day under forty. She was rather thin, had fine black eyes, a good complexion, lively but giddy manners, was a great laugher, and still capable of exciting a passing fancy. I soon made myself at home with her, and found out, when she began to talk, that she was neither a widow nor the niece of the Pope. She came from Modena, and was a mere adventuress. This discovery shewed me what sort of a man the abbé was.

I thought from his expression that the count had

taken a fancy to her, and when she asked us to dinner I refused on the plea of an engagement; but Tiretta, who took my meaning, accepted. Soon after I went away with the abbé, whom I dropped at the Quai de la Ferraille, and I then went to beg a dinner at Calsabigi's.

After dinner Calsabigi took me on one side, and told me that M. du Vernai had commissioned him to warn me that I could not dispose of tickets on account.

"Does M. du Vernai take me for a fool or a knave? As I am neither, I shall complain to M. de Boulogne."

"You will be wrong; he merely wanted to warn you and not offend you."

"You offend me very much yourself, sir, in talking to me in that fashion; and you may make up your mind that no one shall talk to me thus a second time."

Calsabigi did all in his power to quiet me down, and at last persuaded me to go with him to M. du Vernai's. The worthy old gentleman seeing the rage I was in apologized to me for what he had said, and told me that a certain Abbé de la Coste had informed him that I did so. At this I was highly indignant, and I told him what had happened that morning, which let M. du Vernai know what kind of a man the abbé was. I never saw him again, either because he got wind of my discovery, or because a happy

chance kept him out of my way; but I heard, three years after, that he had been condemned to the hulks for selling tickets of a Trevaux lottery which was non-existent, and in the hulks he died.

Next day Tiretta came in, and said he had only just returned.

"You have been sleeping out, have you, master profligate?"

"Yes, I was so charmed with the she-pope that I kept her company all the night."

"You were not afraid of being in the way?"

"On the contrary, I think she was thoroughly satisfied with my conversation."

"As far as I can see, you had to bring into play all your powers of eloquence."

"She is so well pleased with my fluency that she has begged me to accept a room in her house, and to allow her to introduce me as a cousin to M. le Noir, who, I suppose, is her lover."

"You will be a trio, then; and how do you think you will get on together?"

"That's her business. She says this gentleman will give me a good situation in the Inland Revenue."

"Have you accepted her offer?"

"I did not refuse it, but I told her that I could do nothing without your advice. She entreated me to get you to come to dinner with her on Sunday."

"I shall be happy to go."

I went with my friend, and as soon as the hare-

brain saw us she fell on Tiretta's neck, calling him dear Count "Sixtimes"—a name which stuck to him all the time he was at Paris.

"What has gained my friend so fine a title, madam?"

"His erotic achievements. He is lord of an honour of which little is known in France, and I am desirous of being the lady."

"I commend you for so noble an ambition."

After telling me of his feats with a freedom which shewed her exemption from vulgar prejudice, she informed me that she wished her cousin to live in the same house, and had already obtained M. le Noir's permission, which was given freely.

"M. le Noir," added the fair Lambertini, "will drop in after dinner, and I am dying to introduce Count 'Sixtimes' to him."

After dinner she kept on speaking of the mighty deeds of my countryman, and began to stir him up, while he, no doubt, pleased to have a witness to his exploits, reduced her to silence. I confess that I witnessed the scene without excitement, but as I could not help seeing the athletic person of the count, I concluded that he might fare well everywhere with the ladies.

About three o'clock two elderly women arrived, to whom the Lambertini eagerly introduced Count "Sixtimes." In great astonishment they enquired the origin of his title, and the heroine of the story

having whispered it to them, my friend became an object of interest.

"I can't believe it," said one of these ladies, ogling the count, while his face seemed to say,—

"Would you like to try?"

Shortly after, a coach stopped at the door, and a fat woman of middle-aged appearance and a very pretty girl were ushered in; after them came a pale man in a black suit and a long wig. After greeting them in a manner which implied intimacy, the Pope's niece introduced her cousin Count "Sixstrokes." The elderly woman seemed to be astonished at such a name, but the Lambertini gave no explanation. Nevertheless, people seemed to think it rather curious that a man who did not know a word of French should be living in Paris, and that in spite of his ignorance he continued to jabber away in an easy manner, though nobody could understand what he was talking about.

After some foolish conversation, the Pope's niece proposed a game at loo. She asked me to play, but on my refusing did not make a point of it, but she insisted on her cousin being her partner.

"He knows nothing about cards," said she; "but that's no matter, he will learn, and I will undertake to instruct him."

As the girl, by whose beauty I was struck, did not understand the game, I offered her a seat by the fire, asking her to grant me the honour of keeping

her company, whereupon the elderly woman who had brought her began to laugh, and said I should have some difficulty in getting her niece to talk about anything, adding, in a polite manner, that she hoped I would be lenient with her as she had only just left a convent. I assured her that I should have no difficulty in amusing myself with one so amiable, and the game having begun I took up my position near the pretty niece.

I had been near her for several minutes, and solely occupied in mute admiration of her beauty, when she asked me who was that handsome gentleman who talked so oddly.

"He is a nobleman, and a fellow-countryman of mine, whom an affair of honour has banished from his country."

"He speaks a curious dialect."

"Yes, but the fact is that French is very little spoken in Italy; he will soon pick it up in Paris, and then he will be laughed at no longer. I am sorry to have brought him here, for in less than twenty-four hours he was spoiled."

"How spoiled?"

"I daren't tell you as, perhaps, your aunt would not like it."

"I don't think I should tell her, but, perhaps, I should not have asked."

"Oh, yes! you should; and as you wish to know I will make no mystery of it. Madame Lambertini

took a fancy to him; they passed the night together, and in token of the satisfaction he gave her she has given him the ridiculous nickname of 'Count Sixtimes.' That's all. I am vexed about it, as my friend was no profligate."

Astonishment—and very reasonable astonishment—will be expressed that I dared to talk in this way to a girl fresh from a convent; but I should have been astonished myself at the bare idea of any respectable girl coming to Lambertini's house. I fixed my gaze on my fair companion, and saw the blush of shame mounting over her pretty face; but I thought that might have more than one meaning.

Judge of my surprise when, two minutes afterwards, I heard this question:

"But what has 'Sixtimes' got to do with sleeping with Madame Lambertini?"

"My dear young lady, the explanation is perfectly simple: my friend in a single night did what a husband often takes six weeks to do."

"And you think me silly enough to tell my aunt of what we have been talking? Don't believe it."

"But there's another thing I am sorry about."

"You shall tell me what that is directly."

The reason which obliged the charming niece to retire for a few minutes may be guessed without our going into explanations. When she came back she went behind her aunt's chair, her eyes fixed on Ti-

retta, and then came up to me, and taking her seat again, said:

"Now, what else is it that you are sorry about?" her eyes sparkling as she asked the question.

"May I tell you, do you think?"

"You have said so much already, that I don't think you need have any scruples in telling me the rest."

"Very good: you must know, then, that this very day, and in my presence he . . . her."

"If that displeased you, you must be jealous."

"Possibly, but the fact is that I was humbled by a circumstance I dare not tell you."

"I think you are laughing at me with your 'dare not tell you.'"

"God forbid, mademoiselle! I will confess, then, that I was humbled because Madame Lambertini made me see that my friend was taller than myself by two inches."

"Then she imposed on you, for you are taller than your friend."

"I am not speaking of that kind of tallness, but another; you know what I mean, and there my friend is really monstrous."

"Monstrous! then what have you to be sorry about? Isn't it better not to be monstrous?"

"Certainly; but in the article we are discussing, some women, unlike you, prefer monstrosity."

"I think that's absurd of them, or rather mad;

or, perhaps, I have not sufficiently clear ideas on the subject to imagine what size it would be to be called monstrous; and I think it is odd that such a thing should humble you."

"You would not have thought it of me, to see me?"

"Certainly not, for when I came into the room I thought you looked a well-proportioned man, but if you are not I am sorry for you."

"I won't leave you in doubt on the subject; look for yourself, and tell me what you think."

"Why, it's you who are the monster! I declare you make me feel quite afraid."

At this she began to perspire violently, and went behind her aunt's chair. I did not stir, as I was sure she would soon come back, putting her down in my own mind as very far removed from silliness or innocence either. I supposed she wished to affect what she did not possess. I was, moreover, delighted at having taken the opportunity so well. I had punished her for having tried to impose on me; and as I had taken a great fancy to her, I was pleased that she seemed to like her punishment. As for her possession of wit, there could be no doubt on that point, for it was she who had sustained the chief part in our dialogue, and my sayings and doings were all prompted by her questions, and the persevering way in which she kept to the subject.

She had not been behind her aunt's chair for

five minutes when the latter was looed. She, not knowing whom to attack, turned on her niece and said, "Get you gone, little silly, you are bringing me bad luck! Besides, it is bad manners to leave the gentleman who so kindly offered to keep you company all by himself."

The amiable niece made no answer, and came back to me smiling. "If my aunt knew," said she, "what you had done to me, she would not have accused me of bad manners."

"I can't tell you how sorry I am. I want you to have some evidence of my repentance, but all that I can do is to go. Will you be offended if I do?"

"If you leave me, my aunt will call me a dreadful stupid, and will say that I have tired you out."

"Would you like me to stay, then?"

"You can't go."

"Had you no idea what I shewed you was like till just now?"

"My ideas on the subject were inaccurate. My aunt only took me out of the convent a month ago, and I had been there since I was seven."

"How old are you now?"

"Seventeen. They tried to make me take the veil, but not having any relish for the fooleries of the cloister I refused."

"Are you vexed with me?"

"I ought to be very angry with you, but I know it was my fault, so I will only ask you to be discreet."

"Don't be afraid, if I were indiscreet I should be the first to suffer."

"You have given me a lesson which will come in useful. Stop! stop! or I will go away."

"No, keep quiet; it's done now."

I had taken her pretty hand, with which she let me do as I liked, and at last when she drew it back she was astonished to find it wanted wiping.

"What is that?"

"The most pleasant of substances, which renovates the world."

"I see you are an excellent master. Your pupils make rapid progress, and you give your lessons with such a learned air."

"Now don't be angry with me for what has happened. I should never have dared to go so far if your beauty had not inspired me."

"Am I to take that speech as a declaration of love?"

"Yes, it is bold, sweetheart, but it is sincere. If it were not, I should be unworthy both of you and of myself."

"Can I believe you?"

"Yes, with all your heart. But tell me if I may hope for your love?"

"I don't know. All I know at present is that I ought to hate you, for in the space of a quarter of an hour you have taught me what I thought I should never know till I was married."

"Are you sorry?"

"I ought to be, although I feel that I have nothing more to learn on a matter which I never dared to think about. But how is it that you have got so quiet?"

"Because we are talking reasonably and after the rapture love requires some repose. But look at this!"

"What! again? Is that the rest of the lesson?"

"It is the natural result of it."

"How is it that you don't frighten me now?"

"The soldier gets used to fire."

"I see our fire is going out."

With these words she took up a stick to poke the fire, and as she was stooping down in a favourable position my rash hand dared to approach the porch of the temple, and found the door closed in such sort that it would be necessary to break it open if one wished to enter the sanctuary. She got up in a dignified way, and told me in a polite and feeling manner that she was a well-born girl and worthy of respect. Pretending to be confused I made a thousand excuses, and I soon saw the amiable expression return to the face which it became so well. I said that in spite of my repentance I was glad to know that she had never made another man happy.

"Believe me," she said, "that if I make anyone happy it will be my husband, to whom I have given my hand and heart."

I took her hand, which she abandoned to my rapturous kisses. I had reached this pleasant stage in the proceedings when M. le Noir was announced, he having come to enquire what the Pope's niece had to say to him.

M. le Noir, a man of a certain age and of a simple appearance, begged the company to remain seated. The Lambertini introduced me to him, and he asked if I were the artist; but on being informed that I was his elder brother, he congratulated me on my lottery and the esteem in which M. du Vernai held me. But what interested him most was the cousin whom the fair niece of the Pope introduced to him under his real name of Tiretta, thinking, doubtless, that his new title would not carry much weight with M. le Noir. Taking up the discourse, I told him that the count was commended to me by a lady whom I greatly esteemed, and that he had been obliged to leave his country for the present on account of an affair of honour. The Lambertini added that she wished to accommodate him, but had not liked to do so till she had consulted M. le Noir. "Madam," said the worthy man, "you have sovereign power in your own house, and I shall be delighted to see the count in your society."

As M. le Noir spoke Italian very well, Tiretta left the table, and we sat down all four of us by the fire, where my fresh conquest had an opportunity of shewing her wit. M. le Noir was a man of much

intelligence and great experience. He made her talk of the convent where she had been, and as soon as he knew her name he began to speak of her father, with whom he had been well acquainted. He was a councillor of the Parliament of Rouen, and had enjoyed a great reputation during his lifetime.

My sweetheart was above the ordinary height, her hair was a fine golden colour, and her regular features, despite the brilliance of her eyes, expressed candour and modesty. Her dress allowed me to follow all the lines of her figure, and the eyes dwelt pleasantly on the beauty of her form, and on the two spheres which seemed to lament their too close confinement. Although M. le Noir said nothing of all this, it was easy to see that in his own way he admired her perfections no less than I. He left us at eight o'clock, and half an hour afterwards the fat aunt went away followed by her charming niece and the pale man who had come with them. I lost no time in taking leave with Tiretta, who promised the Pope's niece to join her on the morrow, which he did.

Three or four days later I received at my office a letter from Mdlle. de la Meure—the pretty niece. It ran as follows: "Mademe——, my aunt, my late mother's sister, is a devotee, fond of gaming, rich, stingy, and unjust. She does not like me, and not having succeeded in persuading me to take the veil, she wants to marry me to a wealthy Dunkirk merchant, whom I do not know, but (mark this) whom

she does not know any more than I do. The matrimonial agent has praised him very much, and very naturally, as a man must praise his own goods. This gentleman is satisfied with an income of twelve hundred francs per annum, but he promises to leave me in his will no less than a hundred and fifty thousand francs. You must know that by my mother's will my aunt is obliged to pay me on my wedding day twenty-five thousand crowns.

"If what has taken place between us has not made me contemptible in your sight, I offer you my hand and heart with sixty-five thousand francs, and as much more on my aunt's death.

"Don't send me any answer, as I don't know how or by whom to receive your letter. You can answer me in your own person next Sunday at Madame Lambertini's. You will thus have four days whereon to consider this most important question. I do not exactly know whether I love you, but I am quite sure that I prefer you to any other man. I know that each of us has still to gain the other's esteem, but I am sure you would make my life a happy one, and that I should be a faithful wife. If you think that the happiness I seek can add to your own, I must warn you that you will need the aid of a lawyer, as my aunt is miserly, and will stick at trifles.

"If you decide in the affirmative you must find a convent for me to take refuge in before I commit myself to anything, as otherwise I should be exposed

to the harsh treatment I wish to avoid. If, on the other hand, my proposal does not meet your views, I have one favour to ask by granting which you will earn my everlasting gratitude. This is that you will endeavour to see me no more, and will take care not to be present in any company in which you think I am to be found. Thus you will help me to forget you, and this is the least you can do for me. You may guess that I shall never be happy till I have become your wife or have forgotten you. Farewell! I reckon upon seeing you on Sunday."

This letter affected me. I felt that it was dictated by prudent, virtuous, and honourable feelings, and I found even more merit in the intellectual endowments of the girl than in her beauty. I blushed at having in a manner led her astray, and I should have thought myself worthy of punishment if I had been capable of refusing the hand offered to me with so much nobility of feeling. And a second but still a powerful consideration made me look complacently upon a fortune larger than I could reasonably expect to win. Nevertheless, the idea of the marriage state, for which I felt I had no vocation, made me tremble.

I knew myself too well not to be aware that as a married man I should be unhappy, and, consequently, with the best intentions I should fail in making the woman's life a happy one. My uncertainty in the four days which she had wisely left me convinced

me that I was not in love with her. In spite of that, so weak was I that I could not summon up courage to reject her offer—still less to tell her so frankly, which would have made her esteem me.

During these four days I was entirely absorbed in this one subject. I bitterly repented of having outraged her modesty, for I now esteemed and respected her, but yet I could not make up my mind to repair the wrong I had done her. I could not bear to incur her dislike, but the idea of tying myself down was dreadful to me; and such is the condition of a man who has to choose between two alternatives, and cannot make up his mind.

Fearing lest my evil genius should take me to the opera or elsewhere, and in spite of myself make me miss my appointment, I resolved to dine with the Lambertini without having come to any decision. The pious niece of the Pope was at mass when I reached her house. I found Tiretta engaged in playing on the flute, but as soon as he saw me he dropped the instrument, ran up to me, embraced me, and gave me back the money his suit had cost me.

"I see you are in cash, old fellow; I congratulate you."

"It's a grievous piece of luck to me, for the money is stolen, and I am sorry I have got it though I was an accomplice in the theft."

"What! the money is stolen?"

"Yes, sharping is done here, and I have been

taught to help. I share in their ill-gotten gains because I have not the strength of mind to refuse. My landlady and two or three women of the same sort pluck the pigeons. The business does not suit me, and I am thinking of leaving it. Sooner or later I shall kill or be killed, and either event will be the death of me, so I am thinking of leaving this cut-throat place as soon as possible."

"I advise you—nay, I bid you do so by all means, and I should think you had better be gone to-day than to-morrow."

"I don't want to do anything suddenly, as M. le Noir is a gentleman and my friend, and he thinks me a cousin to this wretched woman. As he knows nothing of the infamous trade she carries on, he would suspect something, and perhaps would leave her after learning the reason of my departure. I shall find some excuse or other in the course of the next five or six days, and then I will make haste and return to you."

The Lambertini thanked me for coming to dinner in a friendly manner, and told me that we should have the company of Mdlle. de la Meure and her aunt. I asked her if she was still satisfied with my friend "Sixtimes," and she told me that though the count did not always reside on his manor, she was for all that delighted with him; and said she,—

"I am too good a monarch to ask too much of my vassals."

I congratulated her, and we continued to jest till the arrival of the two other guests.

As soon as Mdlle. de la Meure saw me she could scarcely conceal her pleasure. She was in half mourning, and looked so pretty in this costume, which threw up the whiteness of her skin, that I still wonder why that instant did not determine my fate.

Tiretta, who had been making his toilette, rejoined us, and as nothing prevented me from shewing the liking I had taken for the amiable girl I paid her all possible attention. I told the aunt that I found her niece so pretty that I would renounce my bachelorhood if I could find such a mate.

"My niece is a virtuous and sweet-tempered girl, sir, but she is utterly devoid either of intelligence or piety."

"Never mind the intelligence," said the niece, "but I was never found wanting in piety at the convent."

"I dare say the nuns are of the Jesuitical party."

"What has that got to do with it, aunt?"

"Very much, child; the Jesuits and their adherents are well known to have no vital religion. But let us talk of something else. All that I want you to do is to know how to please your future husband."

"Is mademoiselle about to marry, then?"

"Her intended will probably arrive at the beginning of next month."

"Is he a lawyer?"

"No, sir; he is a well-to-do merchant."

"M. le Noir told me that your niece was the daughter of a councillor, and I did not imagine that you would sanction her marrying beneath her."

"There will be no question of such a thing in this instance, sir; and, after all, what is marrying beneath one? My niece's intended is an honest, and therefore a noble, man, and I am sure it will be her fault if she does not lead a life of perfect happiness with him."

"Quite so, supposing she loves him."

"Oh! love and all that kind of thing will come in good time, you know."

As these remarks could only give pain to the young lady, who listened in silence, I changed the conversation to the enormous crowd which would be present at the execution of Damien, and finding them extremely desirous of witnessing this horrible sight I offered them a large window with an excellent view. The ladies accepted with great pleasure, and I promised to escort them in good time.

I had no such thing as a window, but I knew that in Paris, as everywhere, money will procure anything. After dinner I went out on the plea of business, and, taking the first coach I came across, in a quarter of an hour I succeeded in renting a first floor window in excellent position for three louis. I paid in advance, taking care to have a receipt.

My business over, I hastened to rejoin the company, and found them engaged in piquet. Mdlle. de la Meure, who knew nothing about it, was tired of looking on. I came up to her, and having something to say we went to the other end of the room.

"Your letter, dearest, has made me the happiest of men. You have displayed in it such intelligence and such admirable characteristics as would win you the fervent adoration of every man of good sense."

"I only want one man's love. I will be content with the esteem of the rest."

"My angel, I will make you my wife, and I shall bless till my latest breath the lucky audacity to which I owe my being chosen before other men who would not have refused your hand, even without the fifty thousand crowns, which are nothing in comparison with your beauty and your wit."

"I am very glad you like me so much."

"Could I do otherwise? And now that you know my heart, do nothing hastily, but trust in me."

"You will not forget how I am placed."

"I will bear it in mind. Let me have time to take a house, to furnish it and to put myself in a position in which I shall be worthy of your hand. You must remember that I am only in furnished apartments; that you are well connected, and that I should not like to be regarded as a fortune-hunter."

"You know that my intended husband will soon arrive?"

"Yes, I will take care of that."

"When he does come, you know, matters will be pushed on rapidly."

"Not too rapidly for me to be able to set you free in twenty-four hours, and without letting your aunt know that the blow comes from me. You may rest assured, dearest, that the minister for foreign affairs, on being assured that you wish to marry me, and me only, will get you an inviolable asylum in the best convent in Paris. He will also retain counsel on your behalf, and if your mother's will is properly drawn out your aunt will soon be obliged to hand over your dowry, and to give security for the rest of the property. Do not trouble yourself about the matter, but let the Dunkirk merchant come when he likes. At all hazards, you may reckon upon me, and you may be sure you will not be in your aunt's house on the day fixed for the wedding."

"I confide in you entirely, but for goodness' sake say no more on a circumstance which wounds my sense of modesty. You said that I offered you marriage because you took liberties with me?"

"Was I wrong?"

"Yes, partly, at all events; and you ought to know that if I had not good reasons I should have done a very foolish thing in offering to marry you, but I may as well tell you that, liberties or no liberties, I should always have liked you better than anyone."

I was beside myself with joy, and seizing her hand I covered it with tender and respectful kisses; and I feel certain that if a notary and priest had been then and there available, I should have married her without the smallest hesitation.

Full of each other, like all lovers, we paid no attention to the horrible racket that was going on at the other end of the room. At last I thought it my duty to see what was happening, and leaving my intended I rejoined the company to quiet Tiretta.

I saw on the table a casket, its lid open, and full of all sorts of jewels; close by were two men who were disputing with Tiretta, who held a book in one hand. I saw at once that they were talking about a lottery, but why were they disputing? Tiretta told me they were a pair of knaves who had won thirty or forty louis of him by means of the book, which he handed to me.

"Sir," said one of the gamesters, "this book treats of a lottery in which all the calculations are made in the fairest manner possible. It contains twelve hundred leaves, two hundred being winning leaves, while the rest are blanks. Anyone who wants to play has only to pay a crown, and then to put a pin's point at random between two leaves of the closed book. The book is then opened at the place where the pin is, and if the leaf is blank the player loses; but if, on the other hand, the leaf bears a number, he is given the corresponding ticket, and

an article of the value indicated on the ticket is then handed to him. Please to observe, sir, that the lowest prize is twelve francs, and there are some numbers worth as much as six hundred francs, and even one to the value of twelve hundred. We have been playing for an hour, and have lost several costly articles, and madam," pointing to my sweetheart's aunt, "has won a ring worth six louis, but as she preferred cash, she continued playing and lost the money she had gained."

"Yes," said the aunt, "and these gentlemen have won everybody's money with their accursed game; which proves it is all a mere cheat."

"It proves they are rogues," said Tiretta.

"But gentlemen," answered one of them, "in that case the receivers of the Government lottery are rogues too;" whereon Tiretta gave him a box on the ear. I threw myself between the two combatants, and told them not to speak a word.

"All lotteries," said I, "are advantageous to the holders, but the king is at the head of the Government lottery, and I am the principal receiver, in which character I shall proceed to confiscate this casket, and give you the choice of the following alternatives: You can, if you like, return to the persons present the money you have unlawfully won from them, whereon I will let you go with your box. If you refuse to do so, I shall send for a policeman, who will take you to prison, and to-morrow you will

be tried by M. Berier, to whom I shall take this book in the morning. We shall soon see whether we are rogues as well as they."

Seeing that they had to do with a man of determination, and that resistance would only result in their losing all, they resolved with as good a grace as they could muster to return all their winnings, and for all I know double the sum, for they were forced to return forty louis, though they swore they had only won twenty. The company was too select for me to venture to decide between them. In point of fact I was rather inclined to believe the rascals, but I was angry with them, and I wanted them to pay a good price for having made a comparison, quite right in the main, but odious to me in the extreme. The same reason, doubtless, prevented me from giving them back their book, which I had no earthly right to keep, and which they asked me in vain to return to them. My firmness and my threats, and perhaps also the fear of the police, made them think themselves lucky to get off with their jewel-box. As soon as they were gone the ladies, like the kindly creatures they were, began to pity them. "You might have given them back their book," they said to me.

"And you, ladies, might have let them keep their money."

"But they cheated us of it."

"Did they? Well, their cheating was done with

the book, and I have done them a kindness by taking it from them."

They felt the force of my remarks, and the conversation took another turn.

Early next morning the two gamesters paid me a visit, bringing with them as a bribe a beautiful casket containing twenty-four lovely pieces of Dresden china. I found this argument irresistible, and I felt obliged to return them the book, threatening them at the same time with imprisonment if they dared to carry on their business in Paris for the future. They promised me to abstain from doing so—no doubt with a mental reservation, but I cared nothing about that.

I resolved to offer this beautiful gift to Mdlle. de la Meure, and I took it to her the same day. I had a hearty welcome, and the aunt loaded me with thanks.

On March the 28th, the day of Damien's martyrdom, I went to fetch the ladies in good time; and as the carriage would scarcely hold us all, no objection was made to my taking my sweetheart on my knee, and in this order we reached the Place de Grève. The three ladies packing themselves together as tightly as possible took up their positions at the window, leaning forward on their elbows, so as to prevent us seeing from behind. The window had two steps to it, and they stood on the second; and in order to see we had to stand on the same step, for if we had

stood on the first we should not have been able to see over their heads. I have my reasons for giving these minutiæ, as otherwise the reader would have some difficulty in guessing at the details which I am obliged to pass over in silence.

We had the courage to watch the dreadful sight for four hours. The circumstances of Damien's execution are too well known to render it necessary for me to speak of them; indeed, the account would be too long a one, and in my opinion such horrors are an offence to our common humanity.

Damien was a fanatic, who, with the idea of doing a good work and obtaining a heavenly reward, had tried to assassinate Louis XV.; and though the attempt was a failure, and he only gave the king a slight wound, he was torn to pieces as if his crime had been consummated.

While this victim of the Jesuits was being executed, I was several times obliged to turn away my face and to stop my ears as I heard his piercing shrieks, half of his body having been torn from him, but the Lambertini and the fat aunt did not budge an inch. Was it because their hearts were hardened? They told me, and I pretended to believe them, that their horror at the wretch's wickedness prevented them feeling that compassion which his unheard-of torments should have excited. The fact was that Tiretta kept the pious aunt curiously engaged during the whole time of the execution, and this, per-

haps, was what prevented the virtuous lady from moving or even turning her head round.

Finding himself behind her, he had taken the precaution to lift up her dress to avoid treading on it. That, no doubt, was according to the rule; but soon after, on giving an involuntary glance in their direction, I found that Tiretta had carried his precautions rather far, and, not wishing to interrupt my friend or to make the lady feel awkward, I turned my head and stood in such a way that my sweetheart could see nothing of what was going on; this put the good lady at her ease. For two hours after I heard a continuous rustling, and relishing the joke I kept quiet the whole time. I admired Tiretta's hearty appetite still more than his courage, but what pleased me most was the touching resignation with which the pious aunt bore it all.

At the end of this long session I saw Madame —— turn round, and doing the same I fixed my gaze on Tiretta, and found him looking as fresh and cool as if nothing had happened, but the aunt seemed to me to have a rather pensive appearance. She had been under the fatal necessity of keeping quiet and letting Tiretta do what he liked for fear of the Lambertini's jests, and lest her niece might be scandalized by the revelation of mysteries of which she was supposed to know nothing.

We set out, and having dropped the Pope's niece at her door, I begged her to lend me Tiretta

for a few hours, and I then took Madame —— to her house in the Rue St. André-des-Arts. She asked me to come and see her the following day as she had something to tell me, and I remarked that she took no notice of my friend as she left us. We went to the "Hôtel de Russie," where they gave you an excellent dinner for six francs a head, and I thought my mad friend stood in need of recruiting his strength.

"What were you doing behind Madame——?" said I.

"I am sure you saw nothing, or anybody else either."

"No, because when I saw the beginning of your manœuvres, and guessed what was coming, I stood in such a way that neither the Lambertini or the pretty niece could see you. I can guess what your goal was, and I must say I admire your hearty appetite. But your wretched victim appears to be rather angry."

"Oh! my dear fellow, that's all the affectation of an old maid. She may pretend to be put out, but as she kept quiet the whole time I am certain she would be glad to begin all over again."

"I think so, too, in her heart of hearts; but her pride might suggest that you had been lacking in respect, and the suggestion would be by no means groundless."

"Respect, you say; but must one not always be

lacking in respect to women when one wants to come to the point?"

"Quite so, but there's a distinction between what lovers may do when they are together, and what is proper in the presence of a mixed company."

"Yes, but I snatched four distinct favours from her, without the least opposition; had I not therefore good reasons for taking her consent for granted?"

"You reason well, but you see she is out of humour with you. She wants to speak to me to-morrow, and I have no doubt that you will be the subject of our conversation."

"Possibly, but still I should think she would not speak to you of the comic piece of business; it would be very silly of her."

"Why so? You don't know these pious women. They are brought up by Jesuits, who often give them some good lessons on the subject, and they are delighted to confess to a third party; and these confessions with a seasoning of tears gives them in their own eyes quite a halo of saintliness."

"Well, let her tell you if she likes. We shall see what comes of it."

"Possibly she may demand satisfaction; in which case I shall be glad to do my best for her."

"You make me laugh! I can't imagine what sort of satisfaction she could claim, unless she wants to punish me by the *lex talionis,* which would be hardly practicable without a repetition of the origi-

nal offence. If she had not liked the game, all she had to do was to give me a push which would have sent me backwards."

"Yes, but that would have let us know what you had been trying to do."

"Well, if it comes to that, the slightest movement would have rendered the whole process null and void; but as it was she stood in the proper position as quiet as a lamb; nothing could be easier."

"It's an amusing business altogether. But did you notice that the Lambertini was angry with you, too? She, perhaps, saw what you were doing, and felt hurt."

"Oh! she has got another cause of complaint against me. We have fallen out, and I am leaving her this evening."

"Really?"

"Yes, I will tell you all about it. Yesterday evening, a young fellow in the Inland Revenue who had been seduced to sup with us by a hussy of Genoa, after losing forty louis, threw the cards in the face of my landlady and called her a thief. On the impulse of the moment I took a candle and put it out on his face. I might have destroyed one of his eyes, but I fortunately hit him on the cheek. He immediately ran for his sword, mine was ready, and if the Genoese had not thrown herself between us murder might have been committed. When the poor wretch saw his cheek in the glass, he became so

furious that nothing short of the return of all his money would appease him. They gave it him back, in spite of my advice, for in doing so they admitted, tacitly at all events, that it had been won by cheating. This caused a sharp dispute between the Lambertini and myself after he had gone. She said we should have kept the forty louis, and nothing would have happened except for my interference, that it was her and not me whom the young man had insulted. The Genoese added that if we had kept cool we should have had the plucking of him, but that God alone knew what he would do now with the mark of the burn on his face. Tired of the talk of these infamous women, I was about to leave them, but my landlady began to ride the high horse, and went so far as to call me a beggar.

"If M. le Noir had not come in just then, she would have had a bad time of it, as my stick was already in my hand. As soon as they saw him they told me to hold my tongue, but my blood was up; and turning towards the worthy man I told him that his mistress had called me a beggar, that she was a common prostitute, that I was not her cousin, nor in any way related to her, and that I should leave her that very day. As soon as I had come to the end of this short and swift discourse, I went out and shut myself up in my room. In the course of the next two hours I shall go and fetch my linen, and I hope to breakfast with you to-morrow."

Tiretta did well. His heart was in the right place, and he was wise not to allow the foolish impulses of youth to plunge him in the sink of corruption. As long as a man has not committed a dishonourable action, as long as his heart is sound, though his head may go astray, the path of duty is still open to him. I should say the same of women if prejudice were not so strong in their case, and if they were not much more under the influence of the heart than the head.

After a good dinner washed down by some delicious Sillery we parted, and I spent the evening in writing. Next morning I did some business, and at noon went to see the distressed devotee, whom I found at home with her charming niece. We talked a few minutes about the weather, and she then told my sweetheart to leave us as she wanted to speak to me. I was prepared for what was coming, and I waited for her to break the silence which all women of her position observe.

"You will be surprised, sir, at what I am going to tell you, for I have determined to bring before you a complaint of an unheard-of character. The case is really of the most delicate nature, and I am impelled to make a confidant of you by the impression you made on me when I first saw you. I consider you to be a man of discretion, of honour, and above all a moral man; in short, I believe you have experienced religion, and if I am making a mistake it will be a

pity, for though I have been insulted I don't lack means of avenging myself, and as you are his friend you will be sorry for him."

"Is Tiretta the guilty party, madam?"

"The same."

"And what is his crime?"

"He is a villain; he has insulted me in the most monstrous manner."

"I should not have thought him capable of doing so."

"I daresay not, but then you are a moral man."

"But what was the nature of his offence? You may confide in my secrecy."

"I really couldn't tell you, it's quite out of the question; but I trust you will be able to guess it. Yesterday, during the execution of the wretched Damien, he strongly abused the position in which he found himself behind me."

"I see; I understand what you mean; you need say no more. You have cause for anger, and he is to blame for acting in such a manner. But allow me to say that the case is not unexampled or even uncommon, and I think you might make some allowance for the strength of love, the close quarters, and above all for the youth and passion of the sinner. Moreover, the offence is one which may be expiated in a number of ways, provided the parties come to an agreement. Tiretta is young and a perfect

gentleman, he is handsome and at bottom a good fellow; could not a marriage be arranged?"

I waited for a reply, but perceiving that the injured party kept silence (a circumstance which seemed to me a good omen) I went on.

"If marriage should not meet your views, we might try a lasting friendship, in which he could shew his repentance and prove himself deserving of pardon. Remember, madam, that Tiretta is only a man, and therefore subject to all the weaknesses of our poor human nature; and even you have your share of the blame."

"I, sir?"

"Involuntarily, madam, involuntarily; not you but your charms led him astray. Nevertheless, without this incentive the circumstance would never have taken place, and I think you should consider your beauty as a mitigation of the offence."

"You plead your cause well, sir, but I will do you justice and confess that all your remarks have been characterized by much Christian feeling. However, you are reasoning on false premises; you are ignorant of his real crime, yet how should you guess it?"

With this she burst into tears, leading me completely off the scent, and not knowing what to think.

"He can't have stolen her purse," said I to myself, "as I don't think him capable of such an action; and if I did I'd blow his brains out."

The afflicted lady soon dried her tears, and went on as follows:

"You are thinking of a deed which one might possibly succeed in reconciling with reason, and in making amends for; but the crime of which that brute has been guilty I dare scarcely imagine, as it is almost enough to drive me mad."

"Good heavens! you can't mean it? This is dreadful; do I hear you aright?"

"Yes. You are moved, I see, but such are the circumstances of the case. Pardon my tears, which flow from anger and the shame with which I am covered."

"Yes, and from outraged religion, too."

"Certainly, certainly. That is the chief source of my grief, and I should have mentioned it if I had not feared you were not so strongly attached to religion as myself."

"Nobody, God be praised! could be more strongly attached to religion than I, and nothing can ever unloose the ties which bind me to it."

"You will be grieved, then, to hear that I am destined to suffer eternal punishment, for I must and will be avenged."

"Not so, madam, perish the thought, as I could not become your accomplice in such a design, and if you will not abandon it at least say nothing to me on the subject. I will promise you to tell him nothing, although as he lives with me the sacred

laws of hospitality oblige me to give him due warning."

"I thought he lived with the Lambertini."

"He left her yesterday. The connection between them was a criminal one, and I have drawn him back from the brink of the precipice."

"You don't mean to say so!"

"Yes, upon my word of honour."

"You astonish one. This is very edifying. I don't wish the young man's death, but you must confess he owes me some reparation."

"He does indeed. A charming Frenchwoman is not to be handled in the Italian manner without signal amends, but I can think of nothing at all commensurate with the offence. There is only one plan, which I will endeavour to carry out if you will agree to it."

"What is that?"

"I will put the guilty party in your power without his knowing what is to happen, and I will leave you alone, so that you can wreak all your wrath upon him, provided you will allow me to be, unknown to him, in the next room, as I shall regard myself as responsible for his safety."

"I consent. You will stay in this room, and he must be left in the other where I shall receive you, but take care he has no suspicion of your presence."

"He shan't dream of it. He will not even know

where I am taking him, for he must not think that I have been informed of his misdoings. As soon as we get there, and the conversation becomes general, I shall leave the room, pretending to be going away."

"When will you bring him? I long to cover him with confusion. I will make him tremble. I am curious to hear how he will justify himself for such an offence."

"I can't say, but I think and hope that your presence will make him eloquent, as I should like to see your differences adjusted."

At one o'clock the Abbé des Forges arrived, and she made me sit down to dinner with them. This abbé was a pupil of the famous Bishop of Auxerre, who was still living. I talked so well on the subject of grace, and made so many quotations from St. Augustine, that the abbé and the devotee took me for a zealous Jansenist—a character with which my dress and appearance did not at all correspond. My sweetheart did not give me a single glance while the meal was going on, and thinking she had some motives I abstained from speaking to her.

After dinner, which, by the way, was a very good one, I promised the offended lady to bring her the culprit bound hand and foot next day, after the play was over. To put her at her ease I said I should walk, as I was certain that he would not recognize the house in the dark.

As soon as I saw Tiretta, I began with a serio-

comic air to reproach him for the dreadful crime he had committed on the body of a lady in every way virtuous and respectable, but the mad fellow began to laugh, and it would have been waste of time for me to try to stop him.

"What!" said he, "she has had the courage to tell you all?"

"You don't deny the fact, then?"

"If she says it is so, I don't think I can give her the lie, but I am ready to swear that I don't know how the land lay. In the position I was in it was impossible for me to say where I took up my dwelling. However, I will quiet her indignation, as I shall come to the point quickly, and not let her wait."

"You will ruin the business if you don't take care; be as long as you can; she will like that best, and it will be to your interest. Don't hurry yourself, and never mind me, as I am sure to get on all right while you are changing anger into a softer passion. Remember not to know that I am in the house, and if you only stay with her a short time (which I don't think will be the case) take a coach and be off. You know the least a pious woman like her can do will be to provide me with fire and company. Don't forget that she is well-born like yourself. These women of quality are, no doubt, as immoral as any other women, since they are constructed of the same material, but they like to have

their pride flattered by certain attentions. She is rich, a devotee, and, what is more, inclined to pleasure; strive to gain her friendship *faciem ad faciem,* as the King of Prussia says. You may, perhaps, make your fortune."

"If she asks you why you have left the Pope's niece, take care not to tell her the reason. She will be pleased with your discretion. In short, do your best to expiate the enormity of your offence."

"I have only to speak the truth. I went in in the dark."

"That's an odd reason, but it may seem convincing to a Frenchwoman."

I need not tell the reader that I gave Tiretta a full account of my conversation with the lady. If any complain of this breach of honour, I must tell them that I had made a mental reservation not to keep my promise, and those who are acquainted with the morality of the children of Ignatius will understand that I was completely at my ease.

Next day we went to the opera, and afterwards, our plans made out, we walked to the house of the insulted and virtuous lady. She received us with great dignity, but yet there was an agreeable undercurrent in her voice and manner which I thought very promising.

"I never take supper," she said, "but if you had forewarned me of your visit I should have got something for you."

After telling her all the news I had heard in the theatre, I pretended to be obliged to go, and begged her to let me leave the count with her for a few minutes.

"If I am more than a quarter of an hour," said I to the count, "don't wait. Take a coach home and we shall see each other to-morrow."

Instead of going downstairs I went into the next room, and two minutes after who should enter but my sweetheart, who looked charmed and yet puzzled at my appearance.

"I think I must be dreaming," said she, "but my aunt has charged me not to leave you alone, and to tell her woman not to come upstairs unless she rings the bell. Your friend is with her, and she told me to speak low as he is not to know that you are here. What does it all mean?"

"You are curious, are you?"

"I confess I am in this instance, for all this mystery seems designed to excite curiosity."

"Dearest, you shall know all; but how cold it is."

"My aunt has told me to make a good fire, she has become liberal or rather lavish all of a sudden; look at the wax candles."

"That's a new thing, is it?"

"Oh, quite new."

As soon as we were seated in front of the fire I began to tell her the story, to which she listened

with all the attention a young girl can give to such a matter; but as I had thought it well to pass over some of the details, she could not properly understand what crime it was that Tiretta had committed. I was not sorry to be obliged to tell her the story in plain language, and to give more expression I employed the language of gesture, which made her blush and laugh at the same time. I then told her that, having taken up the question of the reparation that was due to her aunt, I had so arranged matters that I was certain of being alone with her all the time my friend was engaged. Thereupon I began to cover her pretty face with kisses, and as I allowed myself no other liberties she received my caresses as a proof of the greatness of my love and the purity of my feelings.

"Dearest," she said, "what you say puzzles me; there are two things which I can't understand. How could Tiretta succeed in committing this crime with my aunt, which I think would only be possible with the consent of the party attacked, but quite impossible without it; and this makes me believe that if the thing was done it was done with her hearty good will."

"Very true, for if she did not like it she had only to change her position."

"Not so much as that; she need only have kept the door shut."

"There, sweetheart, you are wrong, for a prop-

erly-made man only asks you to keep still and he will overcome all obstacles. Moreover, I don't expect that your aunt's door is so well shut as yours."

"I believe that I could defy all the Tirettas in the world."

"There's another thing I don't understand, and that is how my blessed aunt came to tell you all about it; for if she had any sense she might have known that it would only make you laugh. And what satisfaction does she expect to get from a brute like that, who possibly thinks the affair a matter of no consequence. I should think he would do the same to any woman who occupied the same position as my aunt."

"You are right, for he told me he went in like a blind man, not knowing where he was going."

"Your friend is a queer fellow, and if other men are like him I am sure I should have no feeling but contempt for them."

"She has told me nothing about the satisfaction she is thinking of, and which she possibly feels quite sure of attaining; but I think I can guess what it will be—namely, a formal declaration of love; and I suppose he will expiate his crime by becoming her lover, and doubtless this will be their wedding night."

"The affair is getting amusing. I can't believe it. My dear aunt is too anxious about her salvation; and how do you imagine the young man can

ever fall in love with her, or play the part with such a face as hers before his eyes. Have you ever seen a countenance as disgusting as my aunt's? Her skin is covered with pimples, her eyes distil humours, and her teeth and breath are enough to discourage any man. She's hideous."

"All that is nothing to a young spark of twenty-five; one is always ready for an assault at that age; not like me who only feel myself a man in presence of charms like yours, of which I long to be the lawful possessor."

"You will find me the most affectionate of wives, and I feel quite sure that I shall have your heart in such good keeping that I shall never be afraid of losing it."

We had talked thus pleasantly for an hour, and Tiretta was still with the aunt. I thought things pointed towards a reconciliation, and judged the matter was getting serious. I told my sweetheart my opinion, and asked her to give me something to eat.

"I can only give you," said she, "some bread and cheese, a slice of ham, and some wine which my aunt pronounces excellent."

"Bring them quick, then; I am fainting with hunger."

She soon laid the table for two, and put on it all the food she had. The cheese was Roquefort, and the ham had been covered with jelly. About ten

persons with reasonable appetites should have been able to sup on what there was; but (how I know not) the whole disappeared, and also two bottles of Chambertin, which I seem to taste now. My sweetheart's eyes gleamed with pleasure: truly Chambertin and Roquefort are excellent things to restore an old love and to ripen a young one.

"Don't you want to know what your aunt has been doing the last two hours with M. Sixtimes?"

"They are playing, perhaps; but there is a small hole in the wall, and I will look and see. I can only see the two candles, and the wicks are an inch long."

"Didn't I say so? Give me a coverlet and I will sleep on the sofa here, and do you go to bed. But let me look at it first."

She made me come into her little room, where I saw a pretty bed, a prayer desk, and a large crucifix.

"Your bed is too small for you, dear heart."

"Oh, not at all! I am very comfortable;" and so saying she laid down at full length.

"What a beautiful wife I shall have! Nay, don't move, let me look at you so." My hand began to press the bosom of her dress, where were imprisoned two spheres which seemed to lament their captivity. I went farther, I began to untie strings. . . . for where does desire stop short?

"Sweetheart, I cannot resist, but you will not love me afterwards."

"I will always love you."

Soon her beautiful breasts were exposed to my burning kisses. The flame of my love lit another in her heart, and forgetting her former self she opened her arms to me, making me promise not to despise her, and what would one not promise! The modesty inherent in the sex, the fear of results, perhaps a kind of instinct which reveals to them the natural faithlessness of men make women ask for such promises, but what mistress, if really amorous, would even think of asking her lover to respect her in the moment of delirious ecstacy, when all one's being is centred on the fulfilment of desire?

After we had passed an hour in these amorous toyings, which set my sweetheart on fire, her charms having never before been exposed to the burning lips or the free caresses of a man, I said to her,—

"I grieve to leave you without having rendered to your beauty the greatest homage which it deserves so well."

A sigh was her only answer.

It was cold, the fire was out, and I had to spend the night on the sofa.

"Give me a coverlet, dearest, that I may go away from you, for I should die here between love and cold if you made me abstain."

"Lie where I have been, sweetheart. I will get up and rekindle the fire."

She got up in all her naked charms, and as she

put a stick to the fire the flame leapt up; I rose, I found her standing so as to display all her beauties, and I could refrain no longer. I pressed her to my heart, she returned my caresses, and till day-break we gave ourselves up to an ecstacy of pleasure.

We had spent four or five delicious hours on the sofa. She then left me, and after making a good fire she went to her room, and I remained on the sofa and slept till noon. I was awakened by Madame——, who wore a graceful undress.

"Still asleep, M. Casanova?"

"Ah! good morning, madam, good morning. And what has become of my friend?"

"He has become mine, I have forgiven him."

"What has he done to be worthy of so generous a pardon?"

"He proved to me that he made a mistake."

"I am delighted to hear it; where is he?"

"He has gone home, where you will find him; but don't say anything about your spending the night here, or he will think it was spent with my niece. I am very much obliged to you for what you have done, and I have only to ask you to be discreet."

"You can count on me entirely, for I am grateful to you for having forgiven my friend."

"Who would not do so? The dear young man is something more than mortal. If you knew how he loved me! I am grateful to him, and I have taken him to board for a year; he will be well lodged,

well fed, and so on."

"What a delightful plan! You have arranged the terms, I suppose."

"All that will be settled in a friendly way, and we shall not need to have recourse to arbitration. We shall set out to-day for Villette, where I have a nice little house; for you know that it is necessary, at first, to act in such a way as to give no opportunity to slanderers. My lover will have all he wants, and whenever you, sir, honour us with your presence you will find a pretty room and a good bed at your disposal. All I am sorry for is that you will find it tedious; my poor niece is so dull."

"Madam, your niece is delightful; she gave me yesterday evening an excellent supper and kept me company till three o'clock this morning."

"Really? I can't make it out how she gave you anything, as there was nothing in the house."

"At any rate, madam, she gave me an excellent supper, of which there are no remains, and after keeping me company she went to bed, and I have had a good night on this comfortable sofa."

"I am glad that you, like myself, were pleased with everything, but I did not think my niece so clever."

"She is very clever, madam—in my eyes, at all events."

"Oh, sir! you are a judge of wit, let us go and

see her. She has locked her door. Come open the door, why have you shut yourself up, you little prude? what are you afraid of. My Casanova is incapable of hurting you."

The niece opened her door and apologized for the disorder of her dress, but what costume could have suited her better? Her beauty was dazzling.

"There she is," said the aunt, "and she is not so bad looking after all, but it is a pity she is so stupid. You were very right to give this gentleman a supper. I am much obliged to you for doing so. I have been playing all night, and when one is playing one only thinks of the game. I have determined on taking young Tiretta to board with us. He is an excellent and clever young man, and I am sure he will learn to speak French before long. Get dressed, my dear, as we must begin to pack. We shall set out this afternoon for Villette, and shall spend there the whole of the spring. There is no need, you know, to say anything about this to my sister."

"I, aunt? Certainly not. Did I ever tell her anything on the other occasions?"

"Other occasions! You see what a silly girl it is. Do you mean by 'other occasions,' that I have been circumstanced like this before?"

"No, aunt. I only meant to say that I had never told her anything of what you did."

"That's right, my dear, but you must learn

to express yourself properly. We dine at two, and I hope to have the pleasure of M. Casanova's company at dinner; we will start immediately after the meal. Tiretta promised to bring his small portmanteau with him. and it will go with our luggage."

After promising to dine with them, I bade the ladies good-bye; and I went home as fast as I could walk, for I was as curious as a woman to know what arrangements had been made.

"Well," said I to Tiretta, "I find you have got a place. Tell me all about it."

"My dear fellow, I have sold myself for a year. My pay is to be twenty-five louis a month, a good table, good lodging, etc., etc."

"I congratulate you."

"Do you think it is worth the trouble?"

"There's no rose without a thorn. She told me you were something more than mortal."

"I worked hard all night to prove it to her; but I am quite sure your time was better employed than mine."

"I slept like a king. Dress yourself, as I am coming to dinner, and I want to see you set out for Villette. I shall come and see you there now and then, as your sweetheart has told me that a room shall be set apart for my convenience."

We arrived at two o'clock. Madame —— dressed in a girlish style presented a singular appearance, but Mdlle. de la Meure's beauty shone

like a star. Love and pleasure had given her a new life, a new being. We had a capital dinner, as the good lady had made the repast dainty like herself; but in the dishes there was nothing absurd, while her whole appearance was comic in the highest degree. At four they all set out, and I spent my evening at the Italian comedy.

I was in love with Mdlle. de la Meure, but Silvia's daughter, whose company at supper was all I had of her, weakened a love which now left nothing more to desire.

We complain of women who, though loving us and sure of our love, refuse us their favours; but we are wrong in doing so, for if they love they have good reason to fear lest they lose us in the moment of satisfying our desires. Naturally they should do all in their power to retain our hearts, and the best way to do so is to cherish our desire of possessing them; but desire is only kept alive by being denied: enjoyment kills it, since one cannot desire what one has got. I am, therefore, of opinion that women are quite right to refuse us. But if it be granted that the passions of the two sexes are of equal strength, how comes it that a man never refuses to gratify a woman who loves him and entreats him to be kind?

We cannot receive the argument founded on the fear of results, as that is a particular and not a general consideration. Our conclusion, then, will

be that the reason lies in the fact that a man thinks more of the pleasure he imparts than that which he receives, and is therefore eager to impart his bliss to another. We know, also, that, as a general rule, women, when once enjoyed, double their love and affection. On the other hand, women think more of the pleasure they receive than of that which they impart, and therefore put off enjoyment as long as possible, since they fear that in giving themselves up they lose their chief good—their own pleasure. This feeling is peculiar to the sex, and is the only cause of coquetry, pardonable in a woman, detestable in a man.

Silvia's daughter loved me, and she knew I loved her, although I had never said so, but women's wit is keen. At the same time she endeavoured not to let me know her feelings, as she was afraid of encouraging me to ask favours of her, and she did not feel sure of her strength to refuse them; and she knew my inconstant nature. Her relations intended her for Clement, who had been teaching her the clavichord for the last three years. She knew of the arrangement and had no objection, for though she did not love him she liked him very well. Most girls are wedded without love, and they are not sorry for it afterwards. They know that by marriage they become of some consequence in the world, and they marry to have a house of their own and a good position in society. They seem to know that a husband

and a lover need not be synonymous terms. At Paris men are actuated by the same views, and most marriages are matters of convenience. The French are jealous of their mistresses, but never of their wives.

There could be no doubt that M. Clement was very much in love, and Mdlle. Baletti was delighted that I noticed it, as she thought this would bring me to a declaration, and she was quite right. The departure of Mdlle. de la Meure had a good deal to do with my determination to declare myself; and I was very sorry to have done so afterwards, for after I had told her I loved her Clement was dismissed, and my position was worse than before. The man who declares his love for a woman in words wants to be sent to school again.

Three days after the departure of Tiretta, I took him what small belongings he had, and Madame —— seemed very glad to see me. The Abbé des Forges arrived just as we were sitting down to dinner, and though he had been very friendly to me at Paris he did not so much as look at me all through the meal, and treated Tiretta in the same way. I, for my part, took no notice of him, but Tiretta, not so patient as I, at last lost his temper and got up, begging Madame —— to tell him when she was going to have that fellow to dine with her. We rose from table without saying a word, and the silent abbé went with madam into another room.

Tiretta took me to see his room, which was

handsomely furnished, and, as was right, adjoined his sweetheart's. Whilst he was putting his things in order, Mdlle. de la Meure made me come and see my apartment. It was a very nice room on the ground floor, and facing her's. I took care to point out to her how easily I could pay her a visit after everyone was in bed, but she said we should not be comfortable in her room, and that she would consequently save me the trouble of getting out of bed. It will be guessed that I had no objections to make to this arrangement.

She then told me of her aunt's folly about Tiretta.

"She believes," said she, "that we do not know he sleeps with her."

"Believes, or pretends to believe."

"Possibly. She rang for me at eleven o'clock this morning and told me to go and ask him what kind of night he had passed. I did so, but seeing his bed had not been slept in I asked him if he had not been to sleep.

"'No,' said he, 'I have been writing all night, but please don't say anything about it to your aunt.' I promised with all my heart to be as silent as the grave."

"Does he make sheep's eyes at you?"

"No, but if he did it would be all the same. Though he is not over sharp he knows, I think, what I think of him."

"Why have you such a poor opinion of him?"

"Why? My aunt pays him. I think selling one's self is a dreadful idea."

"But you pay me."

"Yes, but in the same coin as you give me."

The old aunt was always calling her niece stupid, but on the contrary I thought her very clever, and as virtuous as clever. I should never have seduced her if she had not been brought up in a convent.

I went back to Tiretta, and had some pleasant conversation with him. I asked him how he liked his place.

"I don't like it much, but as it costs me nothing I am not absolutely wretched."

"But her face!"

"I don't look at it, and there's one thing I like about her—she is so clean."

"Does she take good care of you?"

"O yes, she is full of feeling for me. This morning she refused the greeting I offered her. 'I am sure,' said she, 'that my refusal will pain you, but your health is so dear to me that I feel bound to look after it."

As soon as the gloomy Abbé des Forges was gone and Madame —— was alone, we rejoined her. She treated me as her gossip, and played the timid child for Tiretta's benefit, and he played up to her admirably, much to my admiration.

"I shall see no more of that foolish priest,"

said she; "for after telling me that I was lost both in this world and the next he threatened to abandon me, and I took him at his word."

An actress named Quinault, who had left the stage and lived close by, came to call, and soon after Madame Favart and the Abbé de Voisenon arrived, followed by Madame Amelin with a handsome lad named Calabre, whom she called her nephew. He was as like her as two peas, but she did not seem to think that a sufficient reason for confessing she was his mother. M. Patron, a Piedmontese, who also came with her, made a bank at faro and in a couple of hours won everybody's money with the exception of mine, as I knew better than to play. My time was better occupied in the company of my sweet mistress. I saw through the Piedmontese, and had put him down as a knave; but Tiretta was not so sharp, and consequently lost all the money he had in his pockets and a hundred louis besides. The banker having reaped a good harvest put down the cards, and Tiretta told him in good Italian that he was a cheat, to which the Piedmontese replied with the greatest coolness that he lied. Thinking that the quarrel might have an unpleasant ending, I told him that Tiretta was only jesting, and I made my friend say so, too. He then left the company and went to his room.

Eight years afterwards I saw this Paton at

St. Petersburg, and in the year 1767 he was assassinated in Poland.

The same evening I preached Tiretta a severe yet friendly sermon. I pointed out to him that when he played he was at the mercy of the banker, who might be a rogue but a man of courage too, and so in calling him a cheat he was risking his life.

"Am I to let myself be robbed, then?"

"Yes, you have a free choice in the matter; nobody will make you play."

"I certainly will not pay him that hundred louis."

"I advise you to do so, and to do so before you are asked."

"You have a knack of persuading one to do what you will, even though one be disposed to take no notice of your advice."

"That's because I speak from heart and head at once, and have some experience in these affairs as well."

Three quarters of an hour afterwards I went to bed and my mistress came to me before long. We spent a sweeter night than before, for it is often a matter of some difficulty to pluck the first flower; and the price which most men put on this little trifle is founded more on egotism than any feeling of pleasure.

Next day, after dining with the family and admiring the roses on my sweetheart's cheeks, I re-

turned to Paris. Three or four days later Tiretta came to tell me that the Dunkirk merchant had arrived, that he was coming to dine at Madame ——'s, and that she requested me to make one of the party. I was prepared for the news, but the blood rushed into my face. Tiretta saw it, and to a certain extent divined my feelings. "You are in love with the niece," said he.

"Why do you think so?"

"By the mystery you make about her; but love betrays itself even by its silence."

"You are a knowing fellow, Tiretta. I will come to dinner, but don't say a word to anybody."

My heart was rent in twain. Possibly if the merchant had put off his arrival for a month I should have welcomed it; but to have only just lifted the nectar to my lips, and to see the precious vessel escape from my hands! To this day I can recall my feelings, and the very recollection is not devoid of bitterness.

I was in a fearful state of perplexity, as I always was whenever it was necessary for me to resolve, and I felt that I could not do so. If the reader has been placed in the same position he will understand my feelings. I could not make up my mind to consent to her marrying, nor could I resolve to wed her myself and gain certain happiness.

I went to Villette and was a little surprised to

find Mdlle. de la Meure more elaborately dressed than usual.

"Your intended," I said, "would have pronounced you charming without all that."

"My aunt doesn't think so."

"You have not seen him yet?"

"No, but I should like to, although I trust with your help never to become his wife."

Soon after, she arrived with Corneman, the banker, who had been the agent in this business transaction. The merchant was a fine man, about forty, with a frank and open face. His dress was good though not elaborate. He introduced himself simply but in a polite manner to Madame ——, and he did not look at his future wife till the aunt presented her to him. His manner immediately became more pleasing; and without making use of flowers of speech he said in a very feeling way that he trusted the impression he had made on her was equal to that which she had made on him. Her only answer was a low curtsy, but she studied him carefully.

Dinner was served, and in the course of the meal we talked of almost everything—except marriage. The happy pair only caught each other's eyes by chance, and did not speak to one another. After dinner Mdlle. de la Meure went to her room, and the aunt went into her closet with the banker and the merchant, and they were in close conversation

for two hours. At the end of that time the gentlemen were obliged to return to Paris, and Madame ——, after summoning her niece, told the merchant she would expect him to dinner on the day following, and that she was sure that her niece would be glad to see him again.

"Won't you, my dear?"

"Yes, aunt, I shall be very glad to see the gentleman again."

If she had not answered thus, the merchant would have gone away without hearing his future bride speak.

"Well," said the aunt, "what do you think of your husband?"

"Allow me to put off my answer till to-morrow; but be good enough, when we are at table, to draw me into the conversation, for it is very possible that my face has not repelled him, but so far he knows nothing of my mental powers; possibly my want of wit may destroy any slight impression my face may have made."

"Yes, I am afraid you will begin to talk nonsense, and make him lose the good opinion he seems to have formed of you."

"It is not right to deceive anybody. If he is disabused of his fictitious ideas by the appearance of the truth, so much the better for him; and so much the worse for both of us, if we decide on marrying

without the slightest knowledge of each other's habits and ways of thought."

"What do you think of him?"

"I think he is rather nice-looking, and his manners are kind and polite; but let us wait till to-morrow."

"Perhaps he will have nothing more to say to me; I am so stupid."

"I know very well that you think yourself very clever, and that's where your fault lies; it's your self-conceit which makes you stupid, although M. Casanova takes you for a wit."

"Perhaps he may know what he is talking about."

"My poor dear, he is only laughing at you."

"I have good reasons for thinking otherwise, aunt."

"There you go; you will never get any sense."

"Pardon me, madam, if I cannot be of your opinion. Mademoiselle is quite right in saying that I do not laugh at her. I dare to say that to-morrow she will shine in the conversation."

"You think so? I am glad to hear it. Now let us have a game at piquet, and I will play against you and my niece, for she must learn the game."

Tiretta asked leave of his darling to go to the play, and we played on till supper-time. On his return, Tiretta made us almost die of laughing with

his attempts to tell us in his broken French the plot of the play he had seen.

I had been in my bedroom for a quarter of an hour, expecting to see my sweetheart in some pretty kind of undress, when all of a sudden I saw her come in with all her clothes on. I was surprised at this circumstance, and it seemed to me of evil omen.

"You are astonished to see me thus," said she, "but I want to speak to you for a moment, and then I will take off my clothes. Tell me plainly whether I am to consent to this marriage or no?"

"How do you like him?"

"Fairly well."

"Consent, then."

"Very good; farewell! From this moment our love ends, and our friendship begins. Get you to bed, and I will go and do the same. Farewell!"

"No, stay, and let our friendship begin to-morrow."

"Not so, were my refusal to cost the lives of both of us. You know what it must cost me to speak thus, but it is my irrevocable determination. If I am to become another's wife, I must take care to be worthy of him; perhaps I may be happy. Do not hold me, let me go. You know how well I love you."

"At least, let us have one final embrace."

"Alas! no."

"You are weeping."

"No, I am not. In God's name let me go."

"Dear heart, you go but to weep in your chamber; stay here. I will marry you."

"Nay, no more of that."

With these words she made an effort, escaped from my hands, and fled from the room. I was covered with shame and regret, and could not sleep. I hated myself, for I knew not whether I had sinned most grievously in seducing her or in abandoning her to another.

I stayed to dinner next day in spite of my heartbreak and my sadness. Mdlle. de la Meure talked so brilliantly and sensibly to her intended that one could easily see he was enchanted with her. As for me, feeling that I had nothing pleasant to say, I pretended to have the toothache as an excuse for not talking. Sick at heart, absent-minded, and feeling the effects of a sleepless night, I was well-nigh mad with love, jealousy, and despair. Mdlle. de la Meure did not speak to me once, did not so much as look at me. She was quite right, but I did not think so then. I thought the dinner would never come to an end, and I do not think I was ever present at so painful a meal.

As we rose from the table, Madame —— went into her closet with her niece and nephew that was to be, and the niece came out in the course of an hour and bade us congratulate her, as she was to be mar-

ried in a week, and after the wedding she would accompany her husband to Dunkirk. "To-morrow," she added, "we are all to dine with M. Corneman, where the deed of settlement will be signed."

I cannot imagine how it was I did not fall dead on the spot. My anguish cannot be expressed.

Before long it was proposed that we should go to the play, but excusing myself on the plea of business I returned to Paris. As I got to my door I seemed to be in a fever, and I lay down on my bed, but instead of the rest I needed I experienced only remorse and fruitless repentance—the torments of the damned. I began to think it was my duty to stop the marriage or die. I was sure that Mdlle. de la Meure loved me, and I fancied she would not say no if I told her that her refusal to marry me would cost me my life. Full of that idea I rose and wrote her a letter, strong with all the strength of tumultuous passion. This was some relief, and getting into bed I slept till morning. As soon as I was awake I summoned a messenger and promised him twelve francs if he would deliver my letter, and report its receipt in an hour and a half. My letter was under cover of a note addressed to Tiretta, in which I told him that I should not leave the house till I had got an answer. I had my answer four hours after; it ran as follows: "Dearest, it is too late; you have decided on my destiny, and I cannot go back from my word. Come to dinner at M. Corneman's, and be sure that

in a few weeks we shall be congratulating ourselves on having won a great victory. Our love, crowned all too soon, will soon live only in our memories. I beg of you to write to me no more."

Such was my fate. Her refusal, with the still more cruel charge not to write to her again, made me furious. In it I only saw inconstancy. I thought she had fallen in love with the merchant. My state of mind may be judged from the fact that I determined to kill my rival. The most savage plans, the most cruel designs, ran a race through my bewildered brain. I was jealous, in love, a different being from my ordinary self; anger, vanity, and shame had destroyed my powers of reasoning. The charming girl whom I was forced to admire, whom I should have esteemed all the more for the course she had taken, whom I had regarded as an angel, became in my eyes a hateful monster, a meet object for punishment. At last I determined on a sure method of revenge, which I knew to be both dishonourable and cowardly, but in my blind passion I did not hesitate for a moment. I resolved to go to the merchant at M. Corneman's, where he was staying, to tell him all that had passed between the lady and myself, and if that did not make him renounce the idea of marrying her I would tell him that one of us must die, and if he refused my challenge I determined to assassinate him.

With this terrible plan in my brain, which

makes me shudder now when I think of it, I ate with the appetite of a wild beast, lay down and slept till day. I was in the same mind when I awoke, and dressed myself hastily yet carefully, put two good pistols in my pocket and went to M. Corneman's. My rival was still asleep; I waited for him, and for a quarter of an hour my thoughts only grew more bitter and my determination more fixed. All at once he came into the room, in his dressing-gown, and received me with open arms, telling me in the kindest of voices that he had been expecting me to call, as he could guess what feelings I, a friend of his future wife's, would have for him, and saying that his friendship for me should always be as warm as hers.

His honest open face, his straightforward words, overwhelmed me, and I was silent for a few minutes —in fact I did not know what to say. Luckily he gave me enough time to recollect myself, as he talked on for a quarter of an hour without noticing that I did not open my lips.

M. Corneman then came in; coffee was served, and my speech returned to me; but I am happy to say I refrained from playing the dishonourable part I had intended; the crisis was passed.

It may be remarked that the fiercest spirits are like a cord stretched too tight, which either breaks or relaxes. I have known several persons of that temperament—the Chevalier L——, amongst others,

who in a fit of passion used to feel his soul escaping by every pore. If at the moment when his anger burst forth he was able to break something and make a great noise, he calmed down in a moment; reason resumed her sway, and the raging lion became as mild as a lamb.

After I had taken a cup of coffee, I felt myself calmed but yet dizzy in the head, so I bade them good morning and went out. I was astonished but delighted that I had not carried my detestable scheme into effect. I was humbled by being forced to confess to myself that chance and chance alone had saved me from becoming a villain. As I was reflecting on what had happened I met my brother, and he completed my cure. I took him to dine at Silvia's, and stayed there till midnight. I saw that Mdlle. Baletti would make me forget the fair inconstant, whom I wisely determined not to see again before the wedding. To make sure I set out the next day for Versailles, too look after my interests with the Government.

CHAPTER II

THE ABBÉ DE LA VILLE—THE ABBÉ GALIANI—THE NEAPOLITAN DIALECT—I SET OUT FOR DUNKIRK ON A SECRET MISSION—I SUCCEED—I RETURN TO PARIS BY AMIENS—MY ADVENTURE BY THE WAY—M. DE LA BRETONNIÈRE—MY REPORT GIVES SATISFACTION—I AM PAID FIVE HUNDRED LOUIS—REFLECTIONS

A NEW career was opening before me. Fortune was still my friend, and I had all the necessary qualities to second the efforts of the blind goddess on my behalf save one—perseverance. My immoderate life of pleasure annulled the effect of all my other qualities.

M. de Bernis received me in his usual manner, that is more like a friend than a minister. He asked me if I had any inclination for a secret mission.

"Have I the necessary talents?"

"I think so."

"I have an inclination for all honest means of earning a livelihood, and as for my talents I will take your excellency's opinion for granted."

This last observation made him smile, as I had intended.

After a few words spoken at random on the memories of bygone years which time had not entirely defaced, the minister told me to go to the Abbé de la Ville and use his name.

This abbé, the chief permanent official of the foreign office, was a man of cold temperament, a profound diplomatist, and the soul of the department, and high in favour with his excellency the minister. He had served the state well as an agent at The Hague, and his grateful king rewarded him by giving him a bishopric on the day of his death. It was a little late, but kings have not always sufficient leisure to remember things. His heir was a wealthy man named Garnier, who had formerly been chief cook at M. d'Argenson's, and had become rich by profiting by the friendship the Abbé de la Ville had always had for him. These two friends, who were nearly of the same age, had deposited their wills in the hands of the same attorney, and each had made the other his residuary legatee.

After the abbé had delivered a brief discourse on the nature of secret missions and the discretion necessary to those charged with them, he told me that he would let me know when anything suitable for me presented itself.

I made the acquaintance of the Abbé Galiani, the secretary of the Neapolitan Embassy. He was

a brother to the Marquis de Galiani, of whom I shall speak when we come to my Italian travels. The Abbé Galiani was a man of wit. He had a knack of making the most serious subjects appear comic; and being a good talker, speaking French with the ineradicable Neapolitan accent, he was a favourite in every circle he cared to enter. The Abbé de la Ville told him that Voltaire had complained that his *Henriade* had been translated into Neapolitan verse in such sort that it excited laughter.

"Voltaire is wrong," said Galiani, "for the Neapolitan dialect is of such a nature that it is impossible to write verses in it that are not laughable. And why should he be vexed; he who makes people laugh is sure of being beloved. The Neapolitan dialect is truly a singular one; we have in it translations of the Bible and of the *Iliad,* and both are comic."

"I can imagine that the Bible would be, but I should not have thought that would have been the case with the *Iliad.*"

"It is, nevertheless."

I did not return to Paris till the day before the departure of Mdlle. de la Meure, now Madame P——. I felt in duty bound to go and see her, to give her my congratulations, and to wish her a pleasant journey. I found her in good spirits and quite at her ease, and, far from being vexed at this, I was pleased, a certain sign that I was cured. We talked without

the slightest constraint, and I thought her husband a perfect gentleman. He invited us to visit him at Dunkirk, and I promised to go without intending to do so, but the fates willed otherwise.

Tiretta was now left alone with his darling, who grew more infatuated with her Strephon every day, so well did he prove his love for her.

With a mind at ease, I now set myself to sentimentalize with Mdlle. Baletti, who gave me every day some new mark of the progress I was making.

The friendship and respect I bore her family made the idea of seduction out of the question, but as I grew more and more in love with her, and had no thoughts of marriage, I should have been puzzled to say at what end I was aiming, and so let myself glide along the stream without thinking where I was going.

In the beginning of May the Abbé de Bernis told me to come and call on him at Versailles, but first to see the Abbé de la Ville. The first question the abbé asked me was whether I thought myself capable of paying a visit to eight or ten men-of-war in the roads at Dunkirk, of making the acquaintance of the officers, and of completing a minute and circumstantial report on the victualling, the number of seamen, the guns, ammunition, discipline, etc., etc.

"I will make the attempt," I said, "and will hand you in my report on my return, and it will be for you to say if I have succeeded or not."

"As this is a secret mission, I cannot give you a letter of commendation; I can only give you some money and wish you a pleasant journey."

"I do not wish to be paid in advance—on my return you can give me what you think fit. I shall want three or four days before setting out, as I must procure some letters of introduction."

"Very good. Try to come back before the end of the month. I have no further instructions to give you."

On the same day I had some conversation at the Palais Bourbon with my patron, who could not admire sufficiently my delicacy in refusing payment in advance; and taking advantage of my having done so he made me accept a packet of a hundred louis. This was the last occasion on which I made use of his purse; I did not borrow from him at Rome fourteen years afterwards.

"As you are on a secret mission, my dear Casanova, I cannot give you a passport. I am sorry for it, but if I did so your object would be suspected. However, you will easily be able to get one from the first gentleman of the chamber, on some pretext or other. Silvia will be more useful to you in that way than anybody else. You quite understand how discreet your behaviour must be. Above all, do not get into any trouble; for I suppose you know that, if anything happened to you, it would be of no use to talk of your mission. We should be obliged to

know nothing about you, for ambassadors are the only avowed spies. Remember that you must be even more careful and reserved than they, and yet, if you wish to succeed, all this must be concealed, and you must have an air of freedom from constraint that you may inspire confidence. If, on your return, you like to shew me your report before handing it in, I will tell you what may require to be left out or added."

Full of this affair, the importance of which I exaggerated in proportion to my inexperience, I told Silvia that I wanted to accompany some English friends as far as Calais, and that she would oblige me by getting me a passport from the Duc de Gesvres. Always ready to oblige me, she sat down directly and wrote the duke a letter, telling me to deliver it myself since my personal description was necessary. These passports carry legal weight in the Isle de France only, but they procure one respect in all the northern parts of the kingdom.

Fortified with Silvia's letter, and accompanied by her husband, I went to the duke, who was at his estate at St. Toin, and he had scarcely read the letter through before he gave me the passport. Satisfied on this point I went to Villette, and asked Madame —— if she had anything I could take to her niece. "You can take her the box of china statuettes," said she, "if M. Corneman has not sent them already." I called on the banker who gave me the box, and in

return for a hundred louis a letter of credit on a Dunkirk house. I begged him to name me in the letter in a special manner, as I was going for the sake of pleasure. He seemed glad to oblige me, and I started the same evening, and three days later I was at the "Hotel de la Conciergerie," in Dunkirk.

An hour after my arrival I gave the charming Madame P—— an agreeable surprise by handing her the box, and giving her her aunt's messages. Just as she was praising her husband, and telling me how happy she was, he came in, and saying he was delighted to see me asked me to stay in his house, without enquiring whether my stay in Dunkirk would be a long or short one. I of course thanked him, and after promising to dine now and again at his house I begged him to take me to the banker on whom I had a letter.

The banker read my letter, and gave me the hundred louis, and asked me to wait for him at my inn where he would come for me with the governor, a M. de Barail. This gentleman who, like most Frenchmen, was very polite, after making some ordinary enquiries, asked me to sup with him and his wife who was still at the play. The lady gave me as kind a reception as I had received from her husband. After we had partaken of an excellent supper several persons arrived, and play commenced in which I did not join, as I wished to study the society of the place, and above all certain officers of both

services who were present. By means of speaking with an air of authority about naval matters, and by saying that I had served in the navy of the Venetian Republic, in three days I not only knew but was intimate with all the captains of the Dunkirk fleet. I talked at random about naval architecture, on the Venetian system of manœuvres, and I noticed that the jolly sailors were better pleased at my blunders than at my sensible remarks.

Four days after I had been at Dunkirk, one of the captains asked me to dinner on his ship, and after that all the others did the same; and on every occasion I stayed in the ship for the rest of the day. I was curious about everything—and Jack is so trustful! I went into the hold, I asked questions innumerable, and I found plenty of young officers delighted to shew their own importance, who gossipped without needing any encouragement from me. I took care, however, to learn everything which would be of service to me, and in the evenings I put down on paper all the mental notes I had made during the day. Four or five hours was all I allowed myself for sleep, and in fifteen days I found I had learnt enough.

Pleasure, gaming, and idleness—my usual companions—had no part in this expedition, and I devoted all my energies to the object of my mission. I dined once with the banker, once with Madame P——, in the town, and once in a pretty country

house which her husband had, at about a league's distance from Dunkirk. She took me there herself, and on finding myself alone with the woman I had loved so well I delighted her by the delicacy of my behaviour, which was marked only by respect and friendship. As I still thought her charming, and as our connection had only ended six weeks ago, I was astonished to see myself so quiet, knowing my disposition too well to attribute my restraint to virtue. What, then, was the reason? An Italian proverb, speaking for nature, gives the true solution of the riddle.

La Mona non vuol pensieri, and my head was full of thought.

My task was done, and bidding good-bye to all my friends, I set out in my post-chaise for Paris, going by another way for the sake of the change. About midnight, on my asking for horses at some stage, the name of which I forget, they told me that the next stage was the fortified town of Aire, which we should not be allowed to pass through at night-time.

"Get me the horses," said I, "I will make them open the gates."

I was obeyed, and in due time we reached the gates. The postillion cracked his whip and the sentry called out, "Who goes there?"

"Express messenger."

After making me wait for an hour the gate was

opened, and I was told that I must go and speak to the governor. I did so, fretting and fuming on my way as if I were some great person, and I was taken to a room where a man in an elegant night-cap was lying beside a very pretty woman.

"Whose messenger are you?"

"Nobody's, but as I am in a hurry" . . .

"That will do. We will talk the matter over to-morrow. In the meanwhile you will accept the hospitality of the guard-room."

"But, sir" . . .

"But me no buts, if you please; leave the room."

I was taken to the guard-room where I spent the night seated on the ground. The daylight appeared. I shouted, swore, made all the racket I could, said I wanted to go on, but nobody took any notice of me.

Ten o'clock struck. More impatient than I can say, I raised my voice and spoke to the officer, telling him that the governor might assassinate me if he liked, but had no right to deny me pen and paper, or to deprive me of the power of sending a messenger to Paris.

"Your name, sir?"

"Here is my passport."

He told me that he would take it to the governor, but I snatched it away from him.

"Would you like to see the governor?"

"Yes, I should."

We started for the governor's apartments. The officer was the first to enter, and in two minutes came out again and brought me in. I gave up my passport in proud silence. The governor read it through, examining me all the while to see if I was the person described; he then gave it me back, telling me that I was free to go where I liked.

"Not so fast, sir, I am not in such a hurry now. I shall send a messenger to Paris and wait his return; for by stopping me on my journey you have violated all the rights of the subject."

"You violated them yourself in calling yourself a messenger."

"Not at all; I told you that I was not one."

"Yes, but you told your postillion that you were, and that comes to the same thing."

"The postillion is a liar, I told him nothing of the kind."

"Why didn't you shew your passport?"

"Why didn't you give me time to do so? In the course of the next few days we shall see who is right."

"Just as you please."

I went out with the officer who took me to the posting-place, and a minute afterwards my carriage drew up. The posting-place was also an inn, and I told the landlord to have a special messenger ready to carry out my orders, to give me a good room and

a good bed, and to serve me some rich soup immediately; and I warned him that I was accustomed to good fare. I had my portmanteau and all my belongings taken into my room, and having washed and put on my dressing-gown I sat down to write, to whom I did not know, for I was quite wrong in my contention. However, I had begun by playing the great man, and I thought myself bound in honour to sustain the part, without thinking whether I should have to back out of it or no. All the same I was vexed at having to wait in Aire till the return of the messenger, whom I was about to send to the—moon! In the meanwhile, not having closed an eye all night, I determined to take a rest. I was sitting in my shirt-sleeves and eating the soup which had been served to me, when the governor came in unaccompanied. I was both surprised and delighted to see him.

"I am sorry for what has happened, sir, and above all that you think you have good reason for complaint, inasmuch as I only did my duty, for how was I to imagine that your postillion had called you a messenger on his own responsibility."

"That's all very well, sir, but your sense of duty need not have made you drive me from your room."

"I was in need of sleep."

"I am in the same position at the present moment, but a feeling of politeness prevents me from imitating your example."

"May I ask if you have ever been in the service?"

"I have served by land and sea, and have left off when most people are only beginning."

"In that case you will be aware that the gates of a fortified town are only opened by night to the king's messengers or to military superiors."

"Yes, I know; but since they were opened the thing was done, and you might as well have been polite."

"Will you put on your clothes, and walk a short distance with me!"

His invitation pleased me as well as his pride had displeased me. I had been thinking of a duel as a possible solution of the difficulty, but the present course took all trouble out of my hands. I answered quietly and politely that the honour of walking with him would be enough to make me put off all other calls, and I asked him to be seated whilst I made haste to dress myself.

I drew on my breeches, throwing the splendid pistols in my pockets on to the bed, called up the barber, and in ten minutes was ready. I put on my sword, and we went out.

We walked silently enough along two or three streets, passed through a gate, up a court, till we got to a door where my guide stopped short. He asked me to come in, and I found myself in a fine room full of people. I did not think of going back, but behaved as if I had been in my own house.

"Sir—my wife," said the governor; and turning to her without pausing, "here is M. de Casanova, who has come to dinner with us."

"I am delighted to hear it, sir, as otherwise I should have had no chance of forgiving you for waking me up the other night."

"I paid dearly for my fault, madam, but after the purgatory I had endured I am sure you will allow me to be happy in this paradise."

She answered with a charming smile, and after asking me to sit beside her she continued whatever conversation was possible in the midst of a game at cards.

I found myself completely outwitted, but the thing was done so pleasantly that all I could do was to put a good face on it—a feat which I found sufficiently easy from the relief I felt at no longer being bound to send a messenger to I did not know whom.

The governor well satisfied with his victory, got all at once into high spirits, and began to talk about military matters, the Court, and on general topics, often addressing me with that friendly ease which good French society knows so well how to reconcile with the rules of politeness; no one could have guessed that there had ever been the slightest difference between us. He had made himself the hero of the piece by the dexterous manner in which he had led up to the situation, but I had a fair claim

to the second place, for I had made an experienced officer high in command give me the most flattering kind of satisfaction, which bore witness to the esteem with which I had inspired him.

The dinner was served. The success of my part depended on the manner in which it was played, and my wit has seldom been keener than during this meal. The whole conversation was in a pleasant vein, and I took great care to give the governor's wife opportunities for shining in it. She was a charming and pretty woman, still quite youthful, for she was at least thirty years younger than the governor. Nothing was said about my six hours' stay in the guard-room, but at dessert the governor escaped speaking plainly by a joke that was not worth the trouble of making.

"You're a nice man," said he, "to think I was going to fight you. Ah! ah! I have caught you, haven't I?"

"Who told you that I was meditating a duel?"

"Confess that such was the case?"

"I protest; there is a great difference between believing and supposing; the one is positive, the other merely hypothetical. I must confess, however, that your invitation to take a walk roused my curiosity as to what was to come next, and I admire your wit. But you must believe me that I do not regard myself as caught in a trap—far from that, I am so well pleased that I feel grateful to you."

In the afternoon we all took a walk, and I gave my arm to the charming mistress of the house. In the evening I took my leave, and set out early the next day having made a fair copy of my report.

At five o'clock in the morning I was fast asleep in my carriage, when I was suddenly awakened. We were at the gate of Amiens. The fellow at the door was an exciseman—a race everywhere detested and with good cause, for besides the insolence of their manners nothing makes a man feel more like a slave than the inquisitorial search they are accustomed to make through one's clothes and most secret possessions. He asked me if I had anything contraband; and being in a bad temper at being deprived of my sleep to answer such a question I replied with an oath that I had nothing of the sort, and that he would have done better to let me sleep.

"As you talk in that style," said the creature, "we will see what we can see."

He ordered the postillion to pass on with the carriage. He had my luggage hauled down, and not being able to hinder him I fumed in silence.

I saw my mistake, but there was now nothing to be done; and having no contraband goods I had nothing to fear, but my bad temper cost me two weary hours of delay. The joys of vengeance were depicted on the features of the exciseman. At the time of which I am writing these gaugers were the dregs of the people, but would become tractable on

being treated with a little politeness. The sum of twenty-four sous given with good grace would make them as supple as a pair of gloves; they would bow to the travellers, wish them a pleasant journey, and give no trouble. I knew all this, but there are times when a man acts mechanically as I had done, unfortunately.

The scoundrels emptied my boxes and unfolded everything even to my shirts, between which they said I might have concealed English lace.

After searching everything they gave me back my keys, but they had not yet done with me; they began to search my carriage. The rascal who was at the head of them began to shout "victory," he had discovered the remainder of a pound of snuff which I had bought at St. Omer on my way to Dunkirk.

With a voice of triumph the chief exciseman gave orders that my carriage should be seized, and warned me that I would have to pay a fine of twelve hundred francs.

For the nonce my patience was exhausted, and I leave the names I called them to the imagination of the reader; but they were proof against words. I told them to take me to the superintendent's.

"You can go if you like," said they, "we are not your servants."

Surrounded by a curious crowd, whom the noise had drawn together, I began to walk hurriedly towards the town, and entering the first open shop

I came to, I begged the shopkeeper to take me to the superintendent's. As I was telling the circumstances of the case, a man of good appearance, who happened to be in the shop, said that he should be glad to shew me the way himself, though he did not think I should find the superintendent in, as he would doubtless be warned of my coming.

"Without your paying either the fine or caution money," said he, "you will find it a hard matter to get yourself out of the difficulty."

I entreated him to shew me the way to the superintendent's, and not to trouble about anything else. He advised me to give the rabble a louis to buy drink, and thus to rid myself of them, on which I gave him the louis, begging him to see to it himself, and the bargain was soon struck. He was a worthy attorney, and knew his men.

We got to the superintendent's; but, as my guide had warned me, my gentleman was not to be seen. The porter told us that he had gone out alone, that he would not be back before night, and that he did not know where he had gone.

"There's a whole day lost, then," said the attorney.

"Let us go and hunt him up; he must have well-known resorts and friends, and we will find them out. I will give you a louis for the day's work; will that be enough?"

"Ample."

We spent in vain four hours in looking for the superintendent in ten or twelve houses. I spoke to the masters of all of them, exaggerating considerably the injury that had been done me. I was listened to, condoled with, and comforted with the remark that he would certainly be obliged to return to his house at night, and then he could not help hearing what I had to say. That would not suit me, so I continued the chase.

At one o'clock the attorney took me to an old lady, who was thought a great deal of in the town. She was dining all by herself. After giving great attention to my story, she said that she did not think she could be doing wrong in telling a stranger the whereabouts of an individual who, in virtue of his office, ought never to be inaccessible.

"And so, sir, I may reveal to you what after all is no secret. My daughter told me yesterday evening that she was going to dine at Madame N——'s, and that the superintendent was to be there. Do you go after him now, and you will find him at table in the best society in Amiens, but," said she, with a smile, "I advise you not to give your name at the door. The numerous servants will shew you the way without asking for your name. You can then speak to him whether he likes it or not, and though you don't know him he will hear all you say. I am sorry that I cannot be present at so fine a situation."

I gratefully took leave of the worthy lady, and I set off in all haste to the house I had been told of, the attorney, who was almost tired out, accompanying me. Without the least difficulty he and I slipped in between the crowds of servants till we got to a hall where there were more than twenty people sitting down to a rich and delicate repast.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you will excuse my troubling your quiet on this festive occasion with a tale of terror."

At these words, uttered in the voice of Jupiter Tonans, everybody rose. The surprise of the high-born company of knights and ladies at my apparition can easily be imagined.

"Since seven o'clock this morning I have been searching from door to door and from street to street for his honour the superintendent, whom I have at last been fortunate enough to find here, for I know perfectly well that he is present, and that if he have ears he hears me now. I am come to request him to order his scoundrelly myrmidons who have seized my carriage to give it up, so that I may continue my journey. If the laws bid me pay twelve hundred francs for seven ounces of snuff for my own private use, I renounce those laws and declare that I will not pay a farthing. I shall stay here and send a messenger to my ambassador, who will complain that the *jus gentium* has been violated in the Île-de-France in my person, and I will have repara-

tion. Louis XV. is great enough to refuse to become an accomplice in this strange onslaught. And if that satisfaction which is my lawful right is not granted me, I will make the thing an affair of state, and my Republic will not revenge itself by assaulting Frenchmen for a few pinches of snuff, but will expel them all root and branch. If you want to know who I am, read this."

Foaming with rage, I threw my passport on the table. A man picked it up and read it, and I knew him to be the superintendent. While my papers were being handed round I saw expressed on every face surprise and indignation, but the superintendent replied haughtily that he was at Amiens to administer justice, and that I could not leave the town unless I paid the fine or gave surety.

"If you are here to do justice, you will look upon my passport as a positive command to speed me on my way, and I bid you yourself be my surety if you are a gentleman."

"Does high birth go bail for breaches of the law in your country?"

"In my country men of high birth do not condescend to take dishonourable employments."

"No service under the king can be dishonourable."

"The hangman would say the same thing."

"Take care what you say."

"Take care what you do. Know, sir, that I am

a free man who has been grievously outraged, and know, too, that I fear no one. Throw me out of the window, if you dare."

"Sir," said a lady to me in the voice of the mistress of the house, "in my house there is no throwing out of windows."

"Madam, an angry man makes use of terms which his better reason disowns. I am wronged by a most cruel act of injustice, and I humbly crave your pardon for having offended you. Please to reflect that for the first time in my life I have been oppressed and insulted, and that in a kingdom where I thought myself safe from all but highway robbers. For them I have my pistols, and for the worthy superintendents I have a passport, but I find the latter useless. For the sake of seven ounces of snuff which I bought at St. Omer three weeks ago, this gentleman robs me and interrupts my journey, though the king's majesty is my surety that no one shall interfere with me; he calls on me to pay fifty louis, he delivers me to the rage of his impudent menials and to the derision of the mob, from whom I had to rid myself by my money and the aid of this worthy man beside me. I am treated like a scoundrel, and the man who should have been my defender and deliverer slinks away and hides himself, and adds to the insults I have received. His myrmidons have turned my clothes upside down, and pitchforked my linen at the foot of the town gates, to

revenge themselves on me for not giving them twenty-four sous. To-morrow the manner in which I have been treated will be known to the diplomatic bodies at Versailles and Paris, and in a few days it will be in all the newspapers. I will pay not a farthing because I owe not a farthing. Now, sir, am I to send a courier to the Duc de Gesvres?"

"What you have got to do is to pay, and if you do not care to pay, you may do whatever you like."

"Then, ladies and gentlemen, good-bye. As for you, sir, we shall meet again."

As I was rushing out of the room like a madman, I heard somebody calling out to me in good Italian to wait a minute. I turned round, and saw the voice had proceeded from a man past middle age, who addressed the superintendent thus:

"Let this gentleman proceed on his journey; I will go bail for him. Do you understand me, superintendent? I will be his surety. You don't know these Italians. I went through the whole of the last war in Italy, and I understand the national character. Besides, I think the gentleman is in the right."

"Very good," said the official, turning to me. "All you have to do is to pay a matter of thirty or forty francs at the customs' office as the affair is already booked."

"I thought I told you that I would not pay a single farthing, and I tell it you again. But who

are you, sir," said I, turning to the worthy old man, "who are good enough to become surety for me without knowing me?"

"I am a commissary of musters, sir, and my name is de la Bretonnière. I live at Paris in the "Hotel de Saxe," Rue Colombien, where I shall be glad to see you after to-morrow. We will go together to M. Britard, who, after hearing your case, will discharge my bail."

After I had expressed my gratitude, and told him that I would wait upon him without fail, I made my excuses to the mistress of the house and the guests, and left them.

I took my worthy attorney to dinner at the best inn in the place, and I gave him two louis for his trouble. Without his help and that of the commissary I should have been in great difficulty; it would have been a case of the earthen pot and the iron pot over again; for with jacks-in-office reason is of no use, and though I had plenty of money I would never have let the wretches rob me of fifty louis.

My carriage was drawn up at the door of the tavern; and just as I was getting in, one of the excisemen who had searched my luggage came and told me that I should find everything just as I left it.

"I wonder at that, since it has been left in the hands of men of your stamp; shall I find the snuff?"

"The snuff has been confiscated, my lord."

"I am sorry for you, then; for if it had been there I would have given you a louis."

"I will go and look for it directly."

"I have no time to wait for it. Drive on, postillion."

I got to Paris the next day, and four days after I waited on M. de la Bretonnière, who gave me a hearty welcome, and took me to M. Britard, the *fermier-général,* who discharged his bail. This M. Britard was a pleasant young man. He blushed when he heard all I had gone through.

I took my report to M. de Bernis, at the "Hôtel Bourbon," and his excellence spent two hours over it, making me take out all unnecessary matter. I spent the time in making a fair copy, and the next day I took it to M. de la Ville, who read it through in silence, and told me that he would let me know the result. A month after I received five hundred louis, and I had the pleasure of hearing that M. de Crémille, the first lord of the admirality, had pronounced my report to be not only perfectly accurate but very suggestive. Certain reasonable apprehensions prevented me from making myself known to him—an honour which M. de Bernis wished to procure for me.

When I told him my adventures on the way back, he laughed, but said that the highest merit of a secret agent was to keep out of difficulties; for though he might have the tact to extricate himself

from them, yet he got talked of, which it should be his chief care to avoid.

This mission cost the admiralty twelve thousand francs, and the minister might easily have procured all the information I gave him without spending a penny. Any intelligent young naval officer would have done it just as well, and would have acquitted himself with zeal and discretion, to gain the good opinion of the ministers. But all the French ministers are the same. They lavished money which came out of other people's pockets to enrich their creatures, and they were absolute; the down-trodden people counted for nothing, and of this course the indebtedness of the state and the confusion of the finances were the inevitable results. It is quite true that the Revolution was a necessity, but it should have been marked with patriotism and right feeling, not with blood. However, the nobility and clergy were not men of sufficient generosity to make the necessary sacrifices to the king, the state, and to themselves.

Silvia was much amused at my adventures at Aire and Amiens, and her charming daughter shewed much pity for the bad night I had passed in the guard-room. I told her that the hardship would have been much less if I had had a wife beside me. She replied that a wife, if a good one, would have been only too happy to alleviate my troubles by sharing in them, but her mother observed that a

woman of parts, after seeing to the safety of my baggage and my coach, would have busied herself in taking the necessary steps for setting me at liberty, and I supported this opinion as best indicating the real duty of a good wife.

CHAPTER III

THE COUNT DE LA TOUR D'AUVERGNE AND MADAME D'URFÉ—CAMILLE—MY PASSION FOR THE COUNT'S MISTRESS—THE RIDICULOUS INCIDENT WHICH CURED ME—THE COUNT DE ST. GERMAIN

In spite of my love for Mdlle. Baletti, I did not omit to pay my court to the most noted ladies of the pavement; but I was chiefly interested in kept women, and those who consider themselves as belonging to the public only in playing before them night by night, queens or chamber-maids.

In spite of this affectation, they enjoy what they call their independence, either by devoting themselves to Cupid or to Plutus, and more frequently to both together. As it is not very difficult to make the acquaintance of these priestesses of pleasure and dissipation, I soon got to know several of them.

The halls of the theatres are capital places for amateurs to exercise their talents in intriguing, and I had profited tolerably well by the lessons I had learnt in this fine school.

I began by becoming the friend of their lovers, and I often succeeded by pretending to be a man of whom nobody need be afraid.

Camille, an actress and dancer at the Italian play, with whom I had fallen in love at Fontainebleu seven years ago, was one of those of whom I was most fond, liking the society at her pretty little house, where she lived with the Count d'Eigreville, who was a friend of mine, and fond of my company. He was a brother of the Marquis de Gamache and of the Countess du Rumain, and was a fine young fellow of an excellent disposition. He was never so well pleased as when he saw his mistress surrounded by people—a taste which is rarely found, but which is very convenient, and the sign of a temperament not afflicted by jealousy. Camille had no other lovers—an astonishing thing in an actress of the kind, but being full of tact and wit she drove none of her admirers to despair. She was neither over sparing nor over generous in the distribution of her favours, and knew how to make the whole town rave about her without fearing the results of indiscretion or the sorrows of being abandoned.

The gentleman of whom, after her lover, she took most notice, was the Count de la Tour d'Auvergne, a nobleman of an old family, who idolized her, and, not being rich enough to possess her entirely, had to be content with what she gave him. Camille had given him a young girl, for whose keep she paid, who

lived with Tour d'Auvergne in furnished apartments in the Rue de Taranne, and whom he said he loved as one loves a portrait, because she came from Camille. The count often took her with him to Camille's to supper. She was fifteen, simple in her manners, and quite devoid of ambition. She told her lover that she would never forgive him an act of infidelity except with Camille, to whom she felt bound to yield all since to her she owed all.

I became so much in love with her that I often went to Camille's solely to see her and to enjoy those artless speeches with which she delighted the company. I strove as best I could to conceal my flame, but often I found myself looking quite sad at the thought of the impossibility of my love being crowned with success. If I had let my passion be suspected I should have been laughed at, and should have made myself a mark for the pitiless sarcasms of Camille. However, I got my cure in the following ridiculous manner:

Camille lived at the Barrière Blanche, and on leaving her house, one rainy evening, I sought in vain for a coach to take me home.

"My dear Casanova," said Tour d'Auvergne, "I can drop you at your own door without giving myself the slightest inconvenience, though my carriage is only seated for two; however, my sweetheart can sit on our knees."

I accepted his offer with pleasure, and we seated

ourselves in the carriage, the count on my left hand and Babet on both our knees.

Burning with amorous passion I thought I would take the opportunity, and, to lose no time, as the coachman was driving fast, I took her hand and pressed it softly. The pressure was returned. Joy! I carried the hand to my lips, and covered it with affectionate though noiseless kisses. Longing to convince her of the ardour of my passion, and thinking that her hand would not refuse to do me a sweet service, I . . . but just at critical moment——

"I am really very much obliged to you, my dear fellow," said the Count de la Tour d'Auvergne, "for a piece of politeness thoroughly Italian, of which, however, I do not feel worthy; at least, I hope it's meant as politeness and not as a sign of contempt."

At these dreadful words I stretched out my hand and felt the sleeve of his coat. Presence of mind was no good in a situation like this, when his words were followed by a peal of loud laughter which would have confounded the hardiest spirit. As for me, I could neither join in his laughter nor deny his accusation; the situation was a fearful one, or would have been if the friendly shades of night had not covered my confusion. Babet did her best to find out from the count why he laughed so much, but he could not tell her for laughing, for which I gave thanks with all my heart. At last the carriage stopped at my house, and as soon as my servant had

opened the door of my carriage I got down as fast as I could, and wished them good night—a compliment which Tour d'Auvergne returned with fresh peals of laughter. I entered my house in a state of stupefaction, and half an hour elapsed before I, too, began to laugh at the adventure. What vexed me me most was the expectation of having malicious jests passed upon me, for I had not the least right to reckon on the count's discretion. However, I had enough sense to determine to join in the laughter if I could, and if not, to take it well, for this is, and always will be, the best way to get the laughers on one's own side at Paris.

For three days I saw nothing of the delightful count, and on the fourth I resolved to ask him to take breakfast with me, as Camille had sent to my house to enquire how I was. My adventure would not prevent me visiting her house, but I was anxious to know how it had been taken.

As soon as Tour d'Auvergne saw me he began to roar with laughter, and I joined in, and we greeted each other in the friendliest manner possible. "My dear count," said I, "let us forget this foolish story. You have no business to attack me, as I do not know how to defend myself."

"Why should you defend yourself, my dear fellow. We like you all the better for it, and this humorous adventure makes us merry every evening."

"Everybody knows it, then?"

"Of course, why not? It makes Camille choke with laughter. Come this evening; I will bring Babet, and she will amuse you as she maintains that you were not mistaken."

"She is right."

"Eh? what? You do me too much honour, and I don't believe you; but have it as you like."

"I can't do better, but I must confess when all's said that you were not the person to whom my fevered imagination offered such ardent homage."

At supper I jested, pretended to be astonished at the count's indiscretion, and boasted of being cured of my passion. Babet called me a villain, and maintained that I was far from cured; but she was wrong, as the incident had disgusted me with her, and had attached me to the count, who, indeed, was a man of the most amiable character. Nevertheless, our friendship might have been a fatal one, as the reader will see presently.

One evening, when I was at the Italian theatre, Tour d'Auvergne came up to me and asked me to lend him a hundred louis, promising to repay me next Saturday.

"I haven't got the money," I said, "but my purse and all it contains is at your service."

"I want a hundred louis, my dear fellow, and immediately, as I lost them at play yesterday evening at the Princess of Anhalt's."

"But I haven't got them."

"The receiver of the lottery ought always to be able to put his hand on a hundred louis."

"Yes, but I can't touch my cash-box; I have to give it up this day week."

"So you can; as I will repay you on Saturday. Take a hundred louis from the box, and put in my word of honour instead; don't you think that is worth a hundred louis?"

"I have nothing to say to that, wait for me a minute."

I ran to my office, took out the money and gave it to him. Saturday came but no count, and as I had no money I pawned my diamond ring and replaced the hundred louis I owed the till. Three or four days afterwards, as I was at the Comédie Française, the Count de la Tour d'Auvergne came up to me and began to apologize. I replied by shewing my hand, and telling him that I had pawned my ring to save my honour. He said, with a melancholy air, that a man had failed to keep his word with him, but he would be sure to give me the hundred louis on the Saturday following, adding, "I give you my word of honour."

"Your word of honour is in my box, so let's say nothing about that. You can repay me when you like."

The count grew as pale as death.

"My word of honour, my dear Casanova, is more precious to me than my life; and I will give you the

hundred louis at nine o'clock to-morrow morning at a hundred paces from the *café* at the end of the Champs-Elysées. I will give you them in person, and nobody will see us. I hope you will not fail to be there, and that you will bring your sword. I shall have mine."

"Faith, count! that's making me pay rather dear for my jest. You certainly do me a great honour, but I would rather beg your pardon, if that would prevent this troublesome affair from going any further."

"No, I am more to blame than you, and the blame can only be removed by the sword's point. Will you meet me?"

"I do not see how I can refuse you, although I am very much averse to the affair."

I left him and went to Silvia's, and took my supper sadly, for I really liked this amiable nobleman, and in my opinion the game we were going to play was not worth the candle. I would not have fought if I could have convinced myself that I was in the wrong, but after turning the matter well over, and looking at it from every point of view, I could not help seeing that the fault lay in the count's excessive touchiness, and I resolved to give him satisfaction. At all hazards I would not fail to keep the appointment.

I reached the *café* a moment after him. We took breakfast together and he payed. We then went out

and walked towards the Etoile. When we got to a sheltered place he drew a bundle of a hundred louis from his pocket, gave it me with the greatest courtesy, and said that one stroke of the sword would be sufficient. I could not reply.

He went off four paces and drew his sword. I did the same without saying a word, and stepping forward almost as soon as our blades crossed I thrust and hit him. I drew back my sword and summoned him to keep his word, feeling sure that I had wounded him in his chest.

He gently kissed his sword, and putting his hand into his breast he drew it out covered with blood, and said pleasantly to me, "I am satisfied."

I said to him all that I could, and all that it was my duty to say in the way of compliment, while he was stanching the blood with his handkerchief, and on looking at the point of my sword I was delighted to find that the wound was of the slightest. I told him so: offering to see him home. He thanked me and begged me to keep my own counsel, and to reckon him henceforth amongst my truest friends. After I had embraced him, mingling my tears with my embraces, I returned home, sad at heart but having learnt a most useful lesson. No one ever knew of our meeting, and a week afterwards we supped together at Camille's.

A few days after, I received from M. de la Ville the five hundred louis for my Dunkirk mission. On

my going to see Camille she told me that Tour d'Auvergne was kept in bed by an attack of sciatica, and that if I liked we could pay him a visit the next day. I agreed, and we went. After breakfast was over I told him in a serious voice that if he would give me a free hand I could cure him, as he was not suffering from sciatica but from a moist and windy humour which I could disperse by means of the Talisman of Solomon and five mystic words. He began to laugh, but told me to do what I liked.

"Very good, then I will go out and buy a brush."

"I will send a servant."

"No, I must get it myself, as I want some drugs as well." I bought some nitre, mercury, flower of sulphur, and a small brush, and on my return said, "I must have a little of your . . . this liquid is indispensable, and it must be quite fresh."

Camille and he began to laugh, but I succeeded in keeping the serious face suitable to my office. I handed him a mug and modestly lowered the curtains, and he then did what I wanted.

I made a mixture of the various ingredients, and I told Camille that she must rub his thigh whilst I spoke the charm, but I warned her that if she laughed while she was about it it would spoil all. This threat only increased their good humour, and they laughed without cessation; for as soon as they thought they had got over it, they would look at one another, and after repressing themselves as long as they could

would burst out afresh, till I began to think that I had bound them to an impossible condition. At last, after holding their sides for half an hour, they set themselves to be serious in real earnest, taking my imperturbable gravity for their example. De la Tour d'Auvergne was the first to regain a serious face, and he then offered Camille his thigh, and she, fancying herself on the boards, began to rub the sick man, whilst I mumbled in an undertone words which they would not have understood however clearly I had spoken, seeing that I did not understand them myself.

I was nearly spoiling the efficacy of the operation when I saw the grimaces they made in trying to keep serious. Nothing could be more amusing than the expression on Camille's face. At last I told her that she had rubbed enough, and dipping the brush into the mixture I drew on his thigh the five-pointed star called Solomon's seal. I then wrapped up the thigh in three napkins, and I told him that if he would keep quite quiet for twenty-four hours without taking off his napkins, I would guarantee a cure.

The most amusing part of it all was, that by the time I had done the count and Camille laughed no more, their faces wore a bewildered look, and as for me . . . I could have sworn I had performed the most wonderful work in the world. If one tells

a lie a sufficient number of times, one ends by believing it.

A few minutes after this operation, which I had performed as if by instinct and on the spur of the moment, Camille and I went away in a coach, and I told her so many wonderful tales that when she got out at her door she looked quite mazed.

Four or five days after, when I had almost forgotten the farce, I heard a carriage stopping at my door, and looking out of my window saw M. de la Tour d'Auvergne skipping nimbly out of the carriage.

"You were sure of success, then," said he, "as you did not come to see me the day after your astounding operation."

"Of course I was sure, but if I had not been too busy you would have seen me, for all that."

"May I take a bath?"

"No, don't bathe till you feel quite well."

"Very good. Everybody is in a state of astonishment at your feat, as I could not help telling the miracle to all my acquaintances. There are certainly some sceptics who laugh at me, but I let them talk."

"You should have kept your own counsel; you know what Paris is like. Everybody will be considering me as a master-quack."

"Not at all, not at all. I have come to ask a favour of you."

"What's that?"

"I have an aunt who enjoys a great reputation for her skill in the occult sciences, especially in alchemy. She is a woman of wit, very rich, and sole mistress of her fortune; in short, knowing her will do you no harm. She longs to see you, for she pretends to know you, and says that you are not what you seem. She has entreated me to take you to dine with her, and I hope you will accept the invitation. Her name is the Marchioness d'Urfé."

I did not know this lady, but the name of d'Urfé caught my attention directly, as I knew all about the famous Anne d'Urfé who flourished towards the end of the seventeenth century. The lady was the widow of his great-grandson, and on marrying into the family became a believer in the mystical doctrines of a science in which I was much interested, though I gave it little credit. I therefore replied that I should be glad to go, but on the condition that the party should not exceed the count, his aunt, and myself.

"She has twelve people every day to dinner, and you will find yourself in the company of the best society in Paris."

"My dear fellow, that's exactly what I don't want; for I hate to be thought a magician, which must have been the effect of the tales you have told."

"Oh, no! not at all; your character is well

known, and you will find yourself in the society of people who have the greatest regard for you."

"Are you sure of that?"

"The Duchess de l'Oragnais told me, that, four or five years ago, you were often to be seen at the Palais Royal, and that you used to spend whole days with the Duchess d'Orleans; Madame de Boufflers, Madame de Blots, and Madame de Melfort have also talked to me about you. You are wrong not to keep up your old acquaintances. I know at least a hundred people of the first rank who are suffering from the same malady as that of which you cured me, and would give the half of their goods to be cured."

De la Tour d'Auvergne had reason on his side, but as I knew his wonderful cure had been due to a singular coincidence, I had no desire to expose myself to public ridicule. I therefore told him that I did not wish to become a public character, and that he must tell Madame d'Urfé that I would have the honour of calling on her in strict privacy only, and that she might tell me the day and hour on which I should kneel before her.

The same evening I had a letter from the count making an appointment at the Tuileries for the morrow; he was to meet me there, and take me to his aunt's to dinner. No one else was to be present.

The next day we met each other as had been arranged, and went to see Madame d'Urfé, who lived

on the Quai des Theatins, on the same side as the "Hotel Bouillon."

Madame d'Urfé, a woman advanced in years, but still handsome, received me with all the courtly grace of the Court of the Regency. We spent an hour and a half in indifferent conversation, occupied in studying each other's character. Each was trying to get at the bottom of the other.

I had not much trouble in playing the part of the unenlightened, for such, in point of fact, was my state of mind, and Madame d'Urfé unconsciously betrayed the desire of shewing her learning; this put me at my ease, for I felt sure I could make her pleased with me if I succeeded in making her pleased with herself.

At two o'clock the same dinner that was prepared every day for twelve was served for us three. Nothing worthy of note (so far as conversation went) was done at dinner, as we talked commonplace after the manner of people of fashion.

After the dessert Tour d'Auvergne left us to go and see the Prince de Turenne, who was in a high fever, and after he was gone Madame d'Urfé began to discuss alchemy and magic, and all the other branches of her beloved science, or rather infatuation. When we got on to the *magnum opus,* and I asked her if she knew the nature of the first matter, it was only her politeness which prevented her from laughing; but controlling herself, she replied graciously

that she already possessed the philosopher's stone, and that she was acquainted with all the operations of the work. She then shewed me a collection of books which had belonged to the great d'Urfé, and Renée of Savoy, his wife; but she had added to it manuscripts which had cost her more than a hundred thousand francs. Paracelsus was her favourite author, and according to her he was neither man, woman, nor hermaphrodite, and had the misfortune to poison himself with an overdose of his panacea, or universal medicine. She shewed me a short manuscript in French, where the great work was clearly explained. She told me that she did not keep it under lock and key, because it was written in a cypher, the secret of which was known only to herself.

"You do not believe, then, in steganography."

"No, sir, and if you would like it, I will give you this which has been copied from the original."

"I accept it, madam, with all the more gratitude in that I know its worth."

From the library we went into the laboratory, at which I was truly astonished. She shewed me matter that had been in the furnace for fifteen years, and was to be there for four or five years more. It was a powder of projection which was to transform instantaneously all metals into the finest gold. She shewed me a pipe by which the coal descended to the furnace, keeping it always at the same heat. The lumps of coal were impelled by their own weight at

proper intervals and in equal quantities, so that she was often three months without looking at the furnace, the temperature remaining the same the whole time. The cinders were removed by another pipe, most ingeniously contrived, which also answered the purpose of a ventilator.

The calcination of mercury was mere child's play to this wonderful woman. She shewed me the calcined matter, and said that whenever I liked she would instruct me as to the process. I next saw the Tree of Diana of the famous Taliamed, whose pupil she was. His real name was Maillot, and according to Madame d'Urfé he had not, as was supposed, died at Marseilles, but was still alive; "and," added she, with a slight smile, "I often get letters from him. If the Regent of France," said she, "had listened to me he would be alive now. He was my first friend; he gave me the name of Egeria, and he married me to M. d'Urfé."

She possessed a commentary on Raymond Lully, which cleared up all difficult points in the comments of Arnold de Villanova on the works of Roger Bacon and Heber, who, according to her, were still alive. This precious manuscript was in an ivory casket, the key of which she kept religiously; indeed her laboratory was a closed room to all but myself. I saw a small cask full of *platina del Pinto,* which she told me she could transmute into gold when she pleased. It had been given her by M. Vood himself in 1743.

She shewed me the same metal in four phials. In the first three the platinum remained intact in sulphuric, nitric, and muriatic acid, but in the fourth, which contained *aqua regia,* the metal had not been able to resist the action of the acid. She melted it with the burning-glass, and said it could be melted in no other way, which proved, in her opinion, its superiority to gold. She shewed me some precipitated by sal ammoniac, which would not precipitate gold.

Her athanor had been alight for fifteen years. The top was full of black coal, which made me conclude that she had been in the laboratory two or three days before. Stopping before the Tree of Diana, I asked her, in a respectful voice, if she agreed with those who said it was only fit to amuse children. She replied, in a dignified manner, that she had made it to divert herself with the crystallization of the silver, spirit of nitre, and mercury, and that she looked upon it as a piece of metallic vegetation, representing in little what nature performed on a larger scale; but she added, very seriously, that she could make a Tree of Diana which should be a very Tree of the Sun, which would produce golden fruit, which might be gathered, and which would continue to be produced till no more remained of a certain ingredient. I said modestly that I could not believe the thing possible without the powder of projection, but her only answer was a pleased smile.

She then pointed out a china basin containing nitre, mercury, and sulphur, and a fixed salt on a plate.

"You know the ingredients, I suppose?" said she.

"Yes; this fixed salt is a salt of urine."

"You are right."

"I admire your sagacity, madam. You have made an analysis of the mixture with which I traced the pentacle on your nephew's thigh, but in what way can you discover the words which give the pentacle its efficacy?"

"In the manuscript of an adept, which I will shew you, and where you will find the very words you used."

I bowed my head in reply, and we left this curious laboratory.

We had scarcely arrived in her room before Madame d'Urfé drew from a handsome casket a little book, bound in black, which she put on the table while she searched for a match. While she was looking about, I opened the book behind her back, and found it to be full of pentacles, and by good luck found the pentacle I had traced on the count's thigh. It was surrounded by the names of the spirits of the planets, with the exception of those of Saturn and Mars. I shut up the book quickly. The spirits named were the same as those in the works of Agrippa, with which I was acquainted. With an unmoved countenance I drew near her, and she soon

found the match, and her appearance surprised me a good deal; but I will speak of that another time.

The marchioness sat down on her sofa, and making me to do the like she asked me if I was acquainted with the talismans of the count de Trèves?

"I have never heard of them, madam, but I know those of Poliphilus."

"It is said they are the same."

"I don't believe it."

"We shall see. If you will write the words you uttered, as you drew the pentacle on my nephew's thigh, and if I find the same talisman with the same words around it, the identity will be proved."

"It will, I confess. I will write the words immediately."

I wrote out the names of the spirits. Madame d'Urfé found the pentacle and read out the names, while I, pretending astonishment, gave her the paper, and much to her delight she found the names to be the same.

"You see," said she, "that Poliphilus and the Count de Trèves possessed the same art."

"I shall be convinced that it is so, if your book contains the manner of pronouncing the ineffable names. Do you know the theory of the planetary hours?"

"I think so, but they are not needed in this operation."

"They are indispensable, madam, for without them one cannot work with any certainty. I drew Solomon's pentacle on the thigh of Count de la Tour d'Auvergne in the hour of Venus, and if I had not begun with Arael, the spirit of Venus, the operation would have had no effect."

"I did not know that. And after Arael?"

"Next comes Mercury, then the Moon, then Jupiter, and then the Sun. It is, you see, the magic cycle of Zoroaster, in which Saturn and Mars are omitted."

"And how would you have proceeded if you had gone to work in the hour of the Moon?"

"I should have begun with Jupiter, passed to the Sun, then to Arael or Venus, and I should have finished at Mercury."

"I see sir, that you are most apt in the calculation of the planetary hours."

"Without it one can do nothing in magic, as one would have no proper data; however, it is an easy matter to learn. Anyone could pick it up in a month's time. The practical use, however, is much more difficult than the theory; this, indeed, is a complicated affair. I never leave my house without ascertaining the exact number of minutes in the day. and take care that my watch is exact to the time, for a minute more or less would make all the difference in the world."

"Would you have the goodness to explain the theory to me."

"You will find it in Artephius and more clearly in Sandivogius."

"I have both works, but they are in Latin."

"I will make you a translation of them."

"You are very kind; I shall be extremely obliged to you."

"I have seen such things here, madam, that I could not refuse, for reasons which I may, perhaps, tell you to-morrow."

"Why not to-day?"

"Because I ought to know the name of your familiar spirit before I tell you."

"You know, then, that I have a familiar? You should have one, if it is true that you possess the powder of projection."

"I have one."

"Give me the oath of the order."

"I dare not, and you know why."

"Perhaps I shall be able to remove your fears by to-morrow."

This absurd oath was none other than that of the princes of the Rosy Cross, who never pronounce it without being certain that each party is a Rosicrucian, so Madame d'Urfé was quite right in her caution, and as for me I had to pretend to be afraid myself. The fact is I wanted to gain time, for I knew perfectly well the nature of the oath. It may

be given between men without any indecency, but a woman like Madame d'Urfé would probably not relish giving it to a man whom she saw for the first time.

"When we find this oath alluded to in the Holy Scriptures," she said, "it is indicated by the words 'he swore to him by laying his hand on his thigh.'"

"But the thigh is not really what is meant; and consequently we never find any notice of a man taking this oath to a woman, as a woman has no *verbum.*"

The Count de la Tour d'Auvergne came back at nine o'clock in the evening, and he shewed no little astonishment at seeing me still with his aunt. He told us that his cousin's fever had increased, and that small-pox had declared itself; "and I am going to take leave of you, my dear aunt, at least for a month, as I intend to shut myself up with the sick man."

Madame d'Urfé praised his zeal, and gave him a little bag on his promising to return it to her after the cure of the prince.

"Hang it round his neck and the eruption will come out well, and he will be perfectly cured."

He promised to do so, and having wished us good evening he went out.

"I do not know, madam, what your bag contains, but if it have aught to do with magic, I have

no confidence in its efficacy, as you have neglected to observe the planetary hour."

"It is an *electrum,* and magic and the observance of the hour have nothing to do with it."

"I beg your pardon."

She then said that she thought my desire for privacy praiseworthy, but she was sure I should not be ill pleased with her small circle, if I would but enter it.

"I will introduce you to all my friends," said she, "by asking them one at a time, and you will then be able to enjoy the company of them all."

I accepted her proposition.

In consequence of this arrangement I dined the next day with M. Gérin and his niece, but neither of them took my fancy. The day after, I dined with an Irishman named Macartney, a physician of the old school, who bored me terribly. The next day the guest was a monk who talked literature, and spoke a thousand follies against Voltaire, whom I then much admired, and against the "Esprit des Lois," a favourite work of mine, which the cowled idiot refused to attribute to Montesquieu, maintaining it had been written by a monk. He might as well have said that a Capuchin created the heavens and the earth.

On the day following Madame d'Urfé asked me to dine with the Chevalier d'Arzigny, a man upwards of eighty, vain, foppish, and consequently

ridiculous, known as "The Last of the Beaus." However, as he had moved in the court of Louis XIV., he was interesting enough, speaking with all the courtesy of the school, and having a fund of anecdote relating to the Court of that despotic and luxurious monarch.

His follies amused me greatly. He used rouge, his clothes were cut in the style which obtained in the days of Madame de Sévigné, he professed himself still the devoted lover of his mistress, with whom he supped every night in the company of his lady friends, who were all young and all delightful, and preferred his society to all others; however, in spite of these seductions, he remained faithful to his mistress.

The Chevalier d'Arzigny had an amiability of character which gave whatever he said an appearance of truth, although in his capacity of courtier truth was probably quite unknown to him. He always wore a bouquet of the most strongly-smelling flowers, such as tuberoses, jonquils, and Spanish jasmine; his wig was plastered down with amber-scented pomade, his teeth were made of ivory, and his eyebrows dyed and perfumed, and his whole person exhaled an odour to which Madame d'Urfé did not object, but which I could scarcely bear. If it had not been for this drawback I should probably have cultivated his society. He was a professed Epicurean, and carried out the system with an amazing tranquillity. He said that he would undertake to receive

twenty-four blows with the stick every morning on the condition that he should not die within the twenty-four hours, and that the older he grew the more blows he would gladly submit to. This was being in love with life with a vengeance.

Another day I dined with M. Charon, who was a counsellor, and in charge of a suit between Madame d'Urfé and her daughter Madame du Chatelet, whom she disliked heartily. The old counsellor had been the favoured lover of the marchioness forty years before, and he thought himself bound by the remembrance of their love-passages to support the cause of his old sweetheart. In those days French magistrates thought they had a right to take the side of their friends, or of persons in whom they had an interest, sometimes for friendship's sake, and sometimes for a monetary consideration; they thought, in fact, that they were justified in selling justice.

M. Charon bored me like the others, as was natural, considering we had no two tastes in common.

The scene was changed the next day when I was amused with the company of M. de Viarme, a young counsellor, a nephew of Madame d'Urfé's, and his pretty and charming wife. He was the author of the "Remonstrances to the King," a work which got him a great reputation, and had been read eagerly by the whole town. He told me that the business of a counsellor was to oppose everything done by the crown, good and bad. His reasons for this theory

were those given by all minorities, and I do not think I need trouble my readers with them.

The most enjoyable dinner I had was with Madame de Gergi, who came with the famous adventurer, known by the name of the Count de St. Germain. This individual, instead of eating, talked from the beginning of the meal to the end, and I followed his example in one respect as I did not eat, but listened to him with the greatest attention. It may safely be said that as a conversationalist he was unequalled.

St. Germain gave himself out for a marvel and always aimed at exciting amazement, which he often succeeded in doing. He was scholar, linguist, musician, and chemist, good-looking, and a perfect ladies' man. For awhile he gave them paints and cosmetics; he flattered them, not that he would make them young again (which he modestly confessed was beyond him) but that their beauty would be preserved by means of a wash which, he said, cost him a lot of money, but which he gave away freely.

He had contrived to gain the favour of Madame de Pompadour, who had spoken about him to the king, for whom he had made a laboratory, in which the monarch—a martyr to boredom—tried to find a little pleasure—or distraction, at all events, by making dyes. The king had given him a suite of rooms at Chambord, and a hundred thousand francs for the construction of a laboratory, and according to St.

Germain the dyes discovered by the king would have a materially beneficial influence on the quality of French fabrics.

This extraordinary man, intended by nature to be the king of impostors and quacks, would say in an easy, assured manner that he was three hundred years old, that he knew the secret of the Universal Medicine, that he possessed a mastery over nature, that he could melt diamonds, professing himself capable of forming, out of ten or twelve small diamonds, one large one of the finest water without any loss of weight. All this, he said, was a mere trifle to him. Notwithstanding his boastings, his barefaced lies, and his manifold eccentricities, I cannot say I thought him offensive. In spite of my knowledge of what he was and in spite of my own feelings, I thought him an astonishing man as he was always astonishing me. I shall have something more to say of this character further on.

When Madame d'Urfé had introduced me to all her friends, I told her that I would dine with her whenever she wished, but that with the exception of her relations and St. Germain, whose wild talk amused me, I should prefer her to invite no company. St. Germain often dined with the best society in the capital, but he never ate anything, saying that he was kept alive by mysterious food known only to himself. One soon got used to his eccentricities,

but not to his wonderful flow of words which made him the soul of whatever company he was in.

By this time I had fathomed all the depths of Madame d'Urfé's character. She firmly believed me to be an adept of the first order, making use of another name for purposes of my own; and five or six weeks later she was confirmed in this wild idea on her asking me if I had deciphered the manuscript which pretended to explain the Magnum Opus.

"Yes," said I, "I have deciphered it, and consequently read it, and I now beg to return it you with my word of honour that I have not made a copy; in fact, I found nothing in it that I did not know before."

"Without the key you mean, but of course you could never find out that."

"Shall I tell you the key?"

"Pray do so."

I gave her the word, which belonged to no language that I know of, and the marchioness was quite thunderstruck.

"This is too amazing," said she; " I thought myself the sole possessor of that mysterious word —for I had never written it down, laying it up in my memory—and I am sure I have never told anyone of it."

I might have informed her that the calculation which enabled me to decipher the manuscript furnished me also with the key, but the whim took me

to tell her that a spirit had revealed it to me. This foolish tale completed my mastery over this truly learned and sensible woman on everything but her hobby. This false confidence gave me an immense ascendancy over Madame d'Urfé, and I often abused my power over her. Now that I am no longer the victim of those illusions which pursued me throughout my life, I blush at the remembrance of my conduct, and the penance I impose on myself is to tell the whole truth, and to extenuate nothing in these Memoirs.

The wildest notion in the good marchioness's brain was a firm belief in the possibility of communication between mortals and elementary spirits. She would have given all her goods to attain to such communication, and she had several times been deceived by impostors who made her believe that she attained her aim.

"I did not think," said she, sadly, "that your spirit would have been able to force mine to reveal my secrets."

"There was no need to force your spirit, madam, as mine knows all things of his own power."

"Does he know the inmost secrets of my soul?"

"Certainly, and if I ask him he is forced to disclose all to me."

"Can you ask him when you like?"

"Oh, yes! provided I have paper and ink. I can

even ask him questions through you by telling you his name."

"And will you tell it me?"

"I can do what I say; and, to convince you, his name is Paralis. Ask him a simple question in writing, as you would ask a common mortal. Ask him, for instance, how I deciphered your manuscript, and you shall see I will compel him to answer you."

Trembling with joy, Madame d'Urfé put her question, expressed it in numbers, then following my method in pyramid shape; and I made her extract the answer, which she wrote down in letters. At first she only obtained consonants, but by a second process which supplied the vowels she received a clear and sufficient answer. Her every feature expressed astonishment, for she had drawn from the pyramid the word which was the key to her manuscript. I left her, carrying with me her heart, her soul, her mind, and all the common sense which she had left.

CHAPTER IV

ABSURD IDEAS OF MADAM D'URFÉ ON MY SUPERNATURAL POWERS—MARRIAGE OF MY BROTHER—I CONCEIVE A PLAN ON HIS WEDDING DAY—I GO TO HOLLAND ON A FINANCIAL MISSION—THE JEW BOAZ GIVES ME A LESSON—M. D'AFRI—ESTHER—ANOTHER CASANOVA—I FIND THÉRÈSE IMER AGAIN

By the time that the Prince du Turenne had recovered from the small-pox and the Count de la Tour d'Auvergne had left him, the latter, knowing his aunt's taste for the occult sciences, was not surprised to find me become her confidant and most intimate friend.

I was glad to see him and all the relations of the marchioness at dinner, as I was delighted with the courtesy with which they treated me. I am referring more especially to her brothers MM. de Pont-Carré and de Viarme who had lately been chosen head of the trade companies, and his son. I have already spoken of Madame du Chatelet, the marchioness's daughter, but an unlucky lawsuit separated them, and she no longer formed one of the family circle.

De la Tour d'Auvergne having been obliged to rejoin his regiment which was in garrison in Brittany, the marchioness and I dined together almost every day and people looked upon me as her husband, and despite the improbability of the supposition this was the only way in which they could account for the long hours we spent together. Madame d'Urfé thought that I was rich and looked upon my position at the lottery as a mere device for preserving my incognito.

I was the possessor in her estimation, not only of the philosopher's stone, but also of the power of speaking with the whole host of elementary spirits; from which premises she drew the very logical deduction that I could turn the world upside down if I liked, and be the blessing or the plague of France; and she thought my object in remaining incognito was to guard myself from arrest and imprisonment; which according to her would be the inevitable result of the minister's discovering my real character. These wild notions were the fruit of the nocturnal revelations of her genius, that is, of the dreams of her disordered spirit, which seemed to her realities. She did not seem to think that if I was endowed as she supposed no one would have been able to arrest me, in the first place, because I should have had foreknowledge of the attempt, and in the second place because my power would have been too strong for all bolts and bars. All this was clear

enough, but strong passion and prejudice cannot reason.

One day, in the course of conversation, she said, with the utmost seriousness, that her genius had advised her that not even I had power to give her speech with the spirits, since she was a woman, and the genii only communicated with men, whose nature is more perfect. Nevertheless, by a process which was well known to me, I might make her soul pass into the body of a male child born of the mystic connection between a mortal and an immortal, or, in other words, between an ordinary man and a woman of a divine nature.

If I had thought it possible to lead back Madame d'Urfé to the right use of her senses I would have made the attempt, but I felt sure that her disease was without remedy, and the only course before me seemed to abet her in her ravings and to profit by them.

If I had spoken out like an honest man and told her that her theories were nonsensical, she would not have believed me; she would have thought me jealous of her knowledge, and I should have lost her favour without any gain to her or to myself. I thus let things take their course, and to speak the truth I was flattered to see myself treated as one of the most profound brothers of the Rosy Cross, as the most powerful of men by so distinguished a lady, who was in high repute for her learning, who en-

tertained and was related to the first families of France, and had an income of eighty thousand francs, a splendid estate, and several magnificent houses in Paris. I was quite sure that she would refuse me nothing, and though I had no definite plan of profiting by her wealth I experienced a certain pleasure at the thought that I could do so if I would.

In spite of her immense fortune and her belief in her ability to make gold, Madame d'Urfé was miserly in her habits, for she never spent more than thirty thousand francs in a year, and she invested her savings in the exchange, and in this way had nearly doubled them. A brother used to buy her in Government securities at their lowest rate and sell at their rise, and in this manner, being able to wait for their rise, and fall, she had amassed a considerable sum.

She had told me more than once that she would give all she possessed to become a man, and that she knew I could do this for her if I would. One day, as she was speaking to me on this subject in a tone of persuasion almost irresistible, I told her that I must confess I had the power to do what she wanted, but that I could not make up my mind to perform the operation upon her as I should have to kill her first. I thought this would effectually check her wish to go any further, but what was my surprise to hear her say,—

"I know that, and what is more I know the death I shall have to die; but for all that I am ready."

"What, then, is that death, madam?"

"It is by the same poison which killed Paracelsus."

"Do you think that Paracelsus obtained the hypostasis?"

"No, but I know the reason of his not doing so."

"What is the reason?"

"It is that he was neither man or woman, and a composite nature is incapable of the hypostasis, to obtain which one must be either the one or the other."

"Very true, but do you know how to make the poison, and that the thing is impossible without the aid of a salamander?"

"That may or may not be! I beseech you to enquire of the oracle whether there be anyone in Paris in possession of this potion."

It was easy to see that she thought herself in possession of it, so I had no hesitation in extracting her name from the oracular pyramid. I pretended to be astonished at the answer, but she said boastfully,—

"You see that all we want is a male child born of an immortal. This, I am advised, will be provided by you; and I do not think you will be found

wanting out of a foolish pity for this poor old body of mine."

At these words I rose and went to the window, where I stayed for more than a quarter of an hour reflecting on her infatuation. When I returned to the table where she was seated she scanned my features attentively, and said, with much emotion, "Can it be done, my dear friend? I see that you have been weeping."

I did not try to undeceive her, and, taking my sword and hat, I took leave of her sadly. Her carriage, which was always at my disposal, was at the door, and I drove to the Boulevards, where I walked till the evening, wondering all the while at the extraordinary fantasies of the marchioness.

My brother had been made a member of the Academy, on the exhibition of a battle piece which had taken all the critics by storm. The picture was purchased by the Academy for five hundred louis.

He had fallen in love with Caroline, and would have married her but for a piece of infidelity on her part, which so enraged him that in a week after he married an Italian dancer. M. de Sanci, the ecclestical commissioner, gave the wedding party. He was fond of the girl, and out of gratitude to my brother for marrying her he got him numerous orders among his friends, which paved the way to the large fortune and high repute which my brother afterwards attained.

M. Corneman, the banker, who was at my brother's wedding, spoke to me at considerable length on the great dearth of money, and asked me to discuss the matter with the comptroller-general.

He told me that one might dispose of Government securities to an association of brokers at Amsterdam, and take in exchange the securities of any other country whose credit was higher than that of France, and that these securities could easily be realized. I begged him to say no more about it, and promised to see what I could do.

The plan pleased me, and I turned it over all night; and the next day I went to the Palais Bourbon to discuss the question with M. de Bernis. He thought the whole idea an excellent one, and advised me to go to Holland with a letter from M. de Choiseul for M. d'Afri, the ambassador at the Hague. He thought that the first person I should consult with M. de Boulogne, with whom he warned me to appear as if I was sure of my ground.

"As you do not require money in advance," said he, "you will be able to get as many letters of recommendation as you like."

The same day I went to the comptroller-general, who approved of my plan, and told me that M. le Duc de Choiseul would be at the Invalides the next day, and that I should speak to him at once, and take a letter he would write for me.

"For my part," said he, "I will credit our am-

bassador with twenty millions, and if, contrary to my hopes, you do not succeed, the paper can be sent back to France."

I answered that there would be no question of the paper being returned, if they would be content with a fair price.

"The margin will be a small one; however, you will hear about that from the ambassador, who will have full instructions."

I felt so flattered by this mission that I passed the night in thinking it over. The next day I went to the Invalides, and M. de Choiseul, so famous for taking decisive action, had no sooner read M. de Boulogne's letter and spoken a few words to me on the subject, than he got me to write a letter for M. d'Afri, which he signed, sealed, returned to me, and wished me a prosperous journey.

I immediately got a passport from M. de Berkenrode, and the same day took leave of Madame Baletti and all my friends except Madame d'Urfé, with whom I was to spend the whole of the next day. I gave my clerk at the lottery office full authority to sign all tickets.

About a month before, a girl from Brussels, as excellent as she was pretty, had been married under my auspices to an Italian named Gaetan, by trade a broker. This fellow, in his fit of jealousy, used to ill-treat her shamefully; I had reconciled them several times already, and they regarded me as a kind

of go-between. They came to see me on the day on which I was making my preparations for going to Holland. My brother and Tiretta were with me, and as I was still living in furnished apartments I took them all to Laudel's, where they gave one an excellent dinner. Tiretta drove his coach-and-four; he was ruining his ex-methodist, who was still desperately in love with him.

In the course of dinner Tiretta, who was always in high spirits and loved a jest, began to flirt with the girl, whom he saw for the first time. She, who neither meant nor suspected any ill, was quite at her ease, and we should have enjoyed the joke, and everything would have gone on pleasantly, if her husband had possessed some modicum of manners and common sense, but he began to get into a perfect fury of jealousy. He ate nothing, changed colour ten times in a minute, and looked daggers at his wife, as much as to say he did not see the joke. To crown all, Tiretta began to crack jests at the poor wretch's expense, and I, foreseeing unpleasantness, endeavoured, though all in vain, to moderate his high spirits and his sallies. An oyster chanced to fall on Madame Gaetan's beautiful breast; and Tiretta, who was sitting near her, took it up with his lips as quick as lightning. Gaetan was mad with rage and gave his wife such a furious box on the ear that his hand passed on from her cheek to that of her neighbour. Tiretta now as enraged as Gaetan

took him by his middle and threw him down, where, having no arms, he defended himself with kicks and fisticuffs, till the waiter came, and we put him out of the room.

The poor wife in tears, and, like Tiretta, bleeding at the nose, besought me to take her away somewhere, as she feared her husband would kill her if she returned to him. So, leaving Tiretta with my brother, I got into a carriage with her and I took her, according to her request, to her kinsman, an old attorney who lived in the fourth story of a house in the Quai des Gèvres. He received us politely, and after having heard the tale, he said,—

"I am a poor man, and I can do nothing for this unfortunate girl; while if I had a hundred crowns I could do everything."

"Don't let that stand in your way," said I, and drawing three hundred francs from my pockets I gave him the money.

"Now, sir," said he, "I will be the ruin of her husband, who shall never know where his wife is."

She thanked me and I left her there; the reader shall hear what became of her when I return from my journey.

On my informing Madame d'Urfé that I was going to Holland for the good of France, and that I should be coming back at the beginning of February, she begged me to take charge of some shares of hers and to sell them for her. They amounted

in value to sixty thousand francs, but she could not dispose of them on the Paris Exchange owing to the tightness in the money market. In addition, she could not obtain the interest due to her, which had mounted up considerably, as she had not had a dividend for three years.

I agreed to sell the shares for her, but it was necessary for me to be constituted depositary and owner of the property by a deed, which was executed the same day before a notary, to whose office we both went.

On returning to her house I wished to give her an I O U for the moneys, but she would not hear of such a thing, and I let her remain satisfied of my honesty.

I called on M. Corneman who gave me a bill of exchange for three hundred florins on M. Boaz, a Jewish banker at the Hague, and I then set out on my journey. I reached Anvers in two days, and finding a yacht ready to start I got on board and arrived at Rotterdam the next day. I got to the Hague on the day following, and after depositing my effects at the "Hotel d'Angleterre" I proceeded to M. d'Afri's, and found him reading M. de Choiseul's letter, which informed him of my business. He asked me to dine in his company and in that of the ambassador of the King of Poland, who encouraged me to proceed in my undertaking though he had not much opinion of my chances of success.

Leaving the ambassador I went to see Boaz, whom I found at table in the midst of a numerous and ugly family. He read my letter and told me he had just received a letter from M. Corneman in which I was highly commended to him. By way of a joke he said that as it was Christmas Eve he supposed I should be going to rock the infant Jesus asleep, but I answered that I was come to keep the Feast of the Maccabees with him—a reply which gained me the applause of the whole family and an invitation to stay with them. I accepted the offer without hesitation, and I told my servant to fetch my baggage from the hotel. Before leaving the banker I asked him to shew me some way of making twenty thousand florins in the short time I was going to stay in Holland.

Taking me quite seriously he replied that the thing might easily be done and that he would think it over.

The next morning after breakfast, Boaz said,—

"I have solved your problem, sir; come in here and I will tell you about it."

He took me into his private office, and, after counting out three thousand florins in notes and gold, he told me that if I liked I could undoubtedly make the twenty thousand florins I had spoken of.

Much surprised at the ease with which money may be got in Holland, as I had been merely jesting

in the remarks I had made, I thanked him for his kindness, and listened to his explanation.

"Look at this note," said he, "which I received this morning from the Mint. It informs me that an issue of four hundred thousand ducats is about to be made which will be disposed of at the current rate of gold, which is fortunately not high just now. Each ducat will fetch five florins, two stivers and three-fifths. This is the rate of exchange with Frankfort. Buy in four hundred thousand ducats; take them or send them to Frankfort, with bills of exchange on Amsterdam, and your business is done. On every ducat you will make a stiver and one-ninth, which comes to twenty-two thousand, two hundred and twenty-two of our florins. Get hold of the gold to-day, and in a week you will have your clear profit. That's my idea."

"But," said I, "will the clerks of the Mint trust me with such a sum?"

"Certainly not, unless you pay them in current money or in good paper."

"My dear sir, I have neither money nor credit to that amount."

"Then you will certainly never make twenty thousand florins in a week. By the way you talked yesterday I took you for a millionaire."

"I am very sorry you were so mistaken."

"I shall get one of my sons to transact the business to-day."

After giving me this rather sharp lesson, M. Boaz went into his office, and I went to dress.

M. d'Afri had paid his call on me at the "Hotel d'Angleterre," and not finding me there he had written me a letter asking me to come and see him. I did so, and he kept me to dinner, shewing me a letter he had received from M. de Boulogne, in which he was instructed not to let me dispose of the twenty millions at a greater loss than eight per cent., as peace was imminent. We both of us laughed at this calm confidence of the Parisian minister, while we who were in a country where people saw deeper into affairs knew that the truth was quite otherwise.

On M. d'Afri's hearing that I was staying with a Jew, he advised me to keep my own counsel when with Jews, "because," said he, "in business, most honest and least knavish mean pretty much the same thing. If you like," he added, "I will give you a letter of introduction to M. Pels, of Amsterdam." I accepted his offer with gratitude, and in the hope of being useful to me in the matter of my foreign shares he introduced me to the Swedish ambassador, who sent me to M. d'O——.

Wanting to be present at a great festival of Freemasons on St. John's Day, I remained at the Hague till the day after the celebration. The Comte de Tot, brother of the baron, who lost all his money at the seraglio, and whom I had met again at the

Hague, introduced me. I was not sorry to be in company with all the best society in Holland.

M. d'Afri introduced me to the mother of the stadtholder, who was only twelve, and whom I thought too grave for his years. His mother was a worthy, patient kind of woman, who fell asleep every minute, even while she was speaking. She died shortly after, and it was discovered at the post-mortem examination that she had a disease of the brain which caused her extreme propensity to sleep. Beside her I saw Count Philip de Zinzendorf, who was looking for twelve millions for the empress—a task which was not very difficult, as he offered five per cent. interest.

At the play I found myself sitting next to the Turkish minister, and I thought he would die with laughter before my eyes. It happened thus:

They were playing *Iphigenia,* that masterpiece of Racine's. The statue of Diana stood in the midst of the stage, and at the end of one act Iphigenia and her train of priestesses, while passing before it, all made a profound bow to the goddess. The candle-snuffer, who perhaps may have been a bad wit, crossed the stage just afterwards, and likewise bowed to the goddess. This put pit and boxes in a good humour, and peals of laughter sounded from all parts of the house. All this had to be explained to the Turk, and he fell into such a fit of laughter that

I thought he would burst. At last he was carried to his inn still laughing but almost senseless.

To have taken no notice of the Dutchman's heavy wit would have been, I confess, a mark of stupidity, but no one but a Turk could have laughed like that. It may be said that a great Greek philosopher died of laughter at seeing a toothless old woman trying to eat figs. But there is a great difference between a Turk and a Greek, especially an ancient Greek.

Those who laugh a good deal are more fortunate than those who do not laugh at all, as laughter is good for the digestion; but there is a just mean in everything.

When I had gone two leagues from Amsterdam in my posting-chaise on two wheels, my servant sitting beside me, I met a carriage on four wheels, drawn like mine by two horses, and containing a fine-looking young man and his servant. His coachman called out to mine to make way for him. My coachman answered that if he did he might turn me into the ditch, but the other insisted on it. I spoke to the master, begging him to tell his coachman to make way for me.

"I am posting, sir," said I; "and, moreover, I am a foreigner."

"Sir," answered he, "in Holland we take no notice of posting or not posting; and if you are a foreigner, as you say, you must confess that you

have fewer rights than I who am in my own country."

The blood rushed to my face. I flung open the door with one hand and took my sword with the other; and leaping into the snow, which was up to my knees, I drew my sword, and summoned the Dutchman to give way or defend himself. He was cooler than I, and replied, smiling, that he was not going to fight for so foolish a cause, and that I might get into my carriage again, as he would make way for me. I was somewhat interested in his cool but pleasant manner. I got back into my chaise, and the next night reached Amsterdam.

I put up at the excellent inn "L'Etoile d'Orient," and in the morning I went on 'Change and found M. Pels. He told me he would think my business over, and finding M. d'O—— directly afterwards he offered to do me my sixty bills and give me twelve per cent. M. Pels told me to wait, as he said he could get me fifteen per cent. He asked me to dinner, and, on my admiring his Cape wine, he told me with a laugh that he had made it himself by mixing Bordeaux and Malaga.

M. d'O—— asked me to dinner on the day following; and on calling I found him with his daughter Esther, a young lady of fourteen, well developed for her age, and exquisite in all respects except her teeth, which were somewhat irregular. M. d'O—— was a widower, and had this only child; consequently,

Esther was heiress to a large fortune. Her excellent father loved her blindly, and she deserved his love. Her skin was snow white, delicately tinted with red; her hair was black as ebony, and she had the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen. She made an impression on me. Her father had given her an excellent education; she spoke French perfectly, played the piano admirably, and was passionately fond of reading.

After dinner M. d'O—— shewed me the uninhabited part of the house, for since the death of his wife, whose memory was dear to him, he lived on the ground floor only. He shewed me a set of rooms where he kept a treasure in the way of old pottery. The walls and windows were covered with plates of marble, each room a different colour, and the floors were of mosaic, with Persian carpets. The dining-hall was cased in alabaster, and the table and the cupboards were of cedar wood. The whole house looked like a block of solid marble, for it was covered with marble without as well as within, and must have cost immense sums. Every Saturday half-a-dozen servant girls, perched on ladders, washed down these splendid walls. These girls wore wide hoops, being obliged to put on breeches, as otherwise they would have interested the passers by in an unseemly manner.

After looking at the house we went down again, and M. d'O—— left me alone with Esther in the

ante-chamber, where he worked with his clerks. As it was New Year's Day there was no business going on.

After playing a sonata, Mdlle. d'O—— asked me if I would go to a concert. I replied that, being in her company, nothing could make me stir. "But would you, mademoiselle, like to go?"

"Yes, I should like to go very well, but I cannot go by myself."

"If I might presume to offer to escort you . . . but I dare not think you would accept."

"I should be delighted, and if you were to ask my father I am sure he would not refuse his permission."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure, for otherwise he would be guilty of impoliteness, and my father would not do such a thing. But I see you don't know the manners of the country."

"I confess I do not."

"Young ladies enjoy great liberty here—liberty which they lose only by marrying. Go and ask, and you will see."

I went to M. d'O—— and made my request, trembling lest I should meet with a refusal.

"Have you a carriage?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I need not give orders to get mine ready. Esther!"

"Yes, father."

"Go and dress, my dear; M. Casanova has been kind enough to offer to take you to the concert."

"How good of him! Thank you, papa, for letting me go."

She threw her arms around his neck, ran to dress, and reappeared an hour after, as fair as the joy which was expressed on her every feature. I could have wished she had used a little powder, but Esther was jealous of her ebon tresses, which displayed the whiteness of her skin to admiration. The chief aim of women in making their toilette is to please men, but how poor is the judgment of most men in such matters compared to the unerring instinct of the generality of women!

A beautiful lace kerchief veiled her bosom, whose glories made my heart beat faster.

We went down the stair, I helped her into the carriage, and stopped, thinking she would be accompanied by one of her women; but seeing nobody I got in myself. The door was shut, and we were off. I was overwhelmed with astonishment. A treasure like this in my keeping! I could hardly think. I asked myself whether I was to remember that I was a free-lance of love, or whether honour bade me forget it. Esther, in the highest spirits, told me that we were going to hear an Italian singer whose voice was exquisite, and noticing my confusion she asked what was the matter. I did not know what to say, and

began to stammer out something, but at last succeeded in saying that she was a treasure of whom I was not worthy to be the keeper.

"I know that in other countries a young girl would not be trusted alone with a gentleman, but here they teach us discretion and how to look after ourselves."

"Happy the man who is charged with your welfare, and happier still he on whom your choice has fallen!"

"That choice is not for me to make; 'tis my father's business."

"But supposing your father's choice is not pleasing to you, or supposing you love another?"

"We are not allowed to love a man until we know he is to be our husband."

"Then you are not in love with anyone?"

"No, and I have never felt the desire to love."

"Then I may kiss your hand?"

"Why should you kiss my hand?"

She drew away her hand and offered me her lovely lips. I took a kiss, which she gave modestly enough, but which went to my heart. My delight was a little alloyed when she said that she would give me another kiss before her father whenever I liked.

We reached the concert-room, where Esther found many of her young friends—all daughters of rich merchants, some pretty, some plain, and all

curious to know who I was. The fair Esther, who knew no more than my name, could not satisfy them. All at once seeing a fair young girl a little way off she pointed her out to me and asked me my opinion of her. Naturally enough I replied that I did not care for fair girls.

"All the same, I must introduce you to her, for she may be a relation of yours. Her name is the same; that is her father over there."

"M. Casanova," said she, speaking to a gentleman, "I beg to introduce to you M. Casanova, a friend of my father's."

"Really? The same name; I wish, sir, you were my friend, as we are, perhaps, related. I belong to the Naples branch."

"Then we are related, though distantly, as my father came from Parma. Have you your pedigree?"

"I ought to have such a thing, but to tell you the truth, I don't think much of such matters. Besants d'or and such heraldic moneys are not currency in a mercantile republic."

"Pedigree-hunting is certainly a somewhat foolish pursuit; but it may nevertheless afford us a few minutes' amusement without our making any parade of our ancestry."

"With all my heart."

"I shall have the honour of calling on you tomorrow, and I will bring my family-tree with me.

Will you be vexed if you find the root of your family also?"

"Not at all; I shall be delighted. I will call on you myself to-morrow. May I ask if you are a business man?"

"No, I am a financial agent in the employ of the French ministry. I am staying with M. Pels."

M. Casanova made a sign to his daughter and introduced me to her. She was Esther's dearest friend, and I sat down between them, and the concert began.

After a fine symphony, a concerto for the violin, another for the hautbois, the Italian singer whose repute was so great and who was styled Madame Trenti made her appearance. What was my surprise when I recognised in her Thérèse Imer, wife of the dancer Pompeati, whose name the reader may remember. I had made her acquaintance eighteen years ago, when the old senator Malipiero had struck me because we were playing together. I had seen her again at Venice in 1753, and then our pastime had been of a more serious nature. She had gone to Bayreuth, where she had been the margrave's mistress. I had promised to go and see her, but C—— C—— and my fair nun M—— M—— had left me neither the time nor the wish to do so. Soon after I was put under the Leads, and then I had other things to think about. I was sufficiently self-controlled not to shew my astonishment, and listened

to an aria which she was singing, with her exquisite voice, beginning *"Eccoti giunta alfin, donna infelice,"* words which seemed made for the case.

The applause seemed as if it would never come to an end. Esther told me that it was not known who she was, but that she was said to be a woman with a history, and to be very badly off. "She goes from one town to another, singing at all the public concerts, and all she receives is what those present choose to give her on a plate which she takes round."

"Does she find that pay?"

"I should suspect not, as everyone has paid already at coming in. She cannot get more than thirty or forty florins. The day after to-morrow she will go to the Hague, then to Rotterdam, then back here again. She has been performing for six months, and she is always well received."

"Has she a lover?"

"She is said to have lovers in every town, but instead of enriching her they make her poorer. She always wears black, not only because she is a widow, but also on account of a great grief she is reported to have gone through. She will soon be coming round." I took out my purse, and counted out twelve ducats, which I wrapped in paper; my heart beating all the while in a ridiculous manner, for I had really nothing to be excited about.

When Thérèse was going along the seats in front of me, I glanced at her for an instant, and I

saw that she looked surprised. I turned my head to speak to Esther, and when she was directly in front of me I put my little packet on the plate without looking at her, and she passed on. A little girl, four or five years old, followed her, and when she got to the end of the bench she came back to kiss my hand. I could not help recognizing in her a fac-simile of myself, but I concealed my emotion. The child stood still, and gazed at me fixedly, to my no small confusion. "Would you like some sweets, my dear?" said I, giving her my box, which I should have geen glad to turn into gold. The little girl took it smilingly, made me a curtsy, and went on.

"Does it strike you, M. Casanova," said Esther, with a laugh, "that you and that little girl are as like each other as two peas?"

"Yes, indeed," added Mdlle. Casanova, "there *is* a striking likeness."

"These resemblances are often the work of chance."

"Just so," said Esther, with a wicked smile, "but you admit a likeness, don't you?"

"I confess I was struck with it, though of course I cannot judge so well as you."

After the concert M. d'O—— arrived, and giving back his daughter to his care I betook myself to my lodging. I was just sitting down to a dish of oysters, before going to bed, when Thérèse made her appearance, holding her child by the hand. Al-

though I had not expected her to visit me that evening, I was nevertheless not much surprised to see her. I, of course, rose to greet her, when all at once she fell fainting on the sofa, though whether the fainting fit was real or assumed I cannot say. Thinking that she might be really ill I played my part properly, and brought her to herself by sprinkling her with cold water and putting my vinaigrette to her nose. As soon as she came to herself she began to gaze at me without saying a word. At last, tired of her silence, I asked her if she would take any supper; and on her replying in the affirmative, I rang the bell and ordered a good supper for three, which kept us at the table till seven o'clock in the morning, talking over our various fortunes and misfortunes. She was already acquainted with most of my recent adventures, but I knew nothing at all about hers, and she entertained me with a recital of them for five or six hours.

Sophie, the little girl, slept in my bed till day, and her mother, keeping the best of her tale to the last, told me that she was my daughter, and shewed me her baptismal certificate. The birth of the child fell in with the period at which I had been intimate with Thérèse, and her perfect likeness to myself left no room for doubt. I therefore raised no objections, but told the mother that I was persuaded of my paternity, and that, being in a position to give the

child a good education, I was ready to be a father to her.

"She is too precious a treasure in my sight; if we were separated I should die."

"You are wrong; for if I took charge of the little girl I should see that she was well provided for."

"I have a son of twelve to whom I cannot give a proper education; take charge of him instead of Sophie."

"Where is he?"

"He is boarding, or rather in pawn, at Rotterdam."

"What do you mean by in pawn?"

"I mean that he will not be returned to me until I pay the person who has got him all my debts."

"How much do you owe?"

"Eighty florins. You have already given me sixty-two, give me four ducats more; you can then take my son, and I shall be the happiest of mothers. I will send my son to you at the Hague next week, as I think you will be there."

"Yes, my dear Thérèse; and instead of four ducats, here are twenty."

"We shall see each other again at the Hague."

She was grateful to excess, but I only felt pity for her and a sort of friendly interest, and kept quite cool, despite the ardour of her embraces. Seeing that her trouble was of no avail, she sighed, shed

some tears, and, taking her daughter, she bid me adieu, promising once more to send me her son.

Thérèse was two years older than I. She was still pretty, and even handsome, but her charms no longer retained their first beauty, and my passion for her, having been a merely physical one, it was no wonder that she had no longer any attraction for me. Her adventures during the six years in which I had lost her would certainly interest my readers, and form a pleasing episode in my book, and I would tell the tale if it were a true one; but not being a romance writer, I am anxious that this work shall contain the truth and nothing but the truth. Convicted by her amorous and jealous margrave of infidelity, she had been sent about her business. She was separated from her husband Pompeati, had followed a new lover to Brussels, and there had caught the fancy of Prince Charles de Lorraine, who had obtained her the direction of all the theatres in the Austrian Low Countries. She had then undertaken this vast responsibility, entailing heavy expenditure, till at last, after selling all her diamonds and lace, she had fled to Holland to avoid arrest. Her husband killed himself at Vienna in a paroxysm caused by internal pain—he had cut open his stomach with a razor, and died tearing at his entrails.

My business left me no time for sleep. M. Casanova came and asked me to dinner, telling me to meet him on the Exchange—a place well worth

seeing. Millionaires are as plentiful as blackberries, and anyone who is not worth more than a hundred thousand florins is considered a poor man. I found M. d'O—— there, and was asked by him to dinner for the following day at a small house he had on the Amstel. M. Casanova treated me with the greatest courtesy. After reading my pedigree he went for his own, and found it exactly the same; but he merely laughed, and seemed to care little about it, differing in that respect from Don Antonio of Naples, who set such store by my pedigree, and treated me with such politeness on that account. Nevertheless, he bade me make use of him in anything relating to business if I did anything in that way. I thought his daughter pretty, but neither her charms nor her wit made any impression on me. My thoughts were taken up with Esther, and I talked so much about her at dinner that at last my cousin declared that she did not consider her pretty. Oh, you women! beauty is the only unpardonable offence in your eyes. Mdlle. Casanova was Esther's friend, and yet she could not bear to hear her praised.

On my seeing M. d'O—— again after dinner, he told me that if I cared to take fifteen per cent. on my shares, he would take them from me and save broker's expenses. I thought the offer a good one, and I accepted it, taking a bill of exchange on Tourton & Baur. At the rate of exchange at Hamburg I found I should have seventy-two thousand francs,

although at five per cent. I had only expected sixty-nine thousand. This transaction won me high favour with Madame d'Urfé, who, perhaps, had not expected me to be so honest.

In the evening I went with M. Pels to Zaandam, in a boat placed on a sleigh and impelled by a sail. It was an extraordinary, but at the same time an amusing and agreeable, mode of travelling. The wind was strong, and we did fifteen miles an hour; we seemed to pass through the air as swiftly as an arrow. A safer and more convenient method of travelling cannot be imagined; it would be an ideal way of journeying round the world if there were such a thing as a frozen sea all round. The wind, however, must be behind, as one cannot sail on a side wind, there being no rudder. I was pleased and astonished at the skill of our two sailors in lowering sail exactly at the proper time; for the sleigh ran a good way, from the impetus it had already received, and we stopped just at the bank of the river, whereas if the sail had been lowered a moment later the sleigh might have been broken to pieces. We had some excellent perch for dinner, but the strength of the wind prevented us from walking about. I went there again, but as Zaandam is well known as the haunt of the millionaire merchants who retire and enjoy life there in their own way, I will say no more about it. We returned in a fine sleigh drawn by two horses, belonging to M. Pels,

and he kept me to supper. This worthy man, whose face bore witness to his entire honesty, told me that as I was now the friend of M. d'O—— and himself, I should have nothing whatever to do with the Jews, but should address myself to them alone. I was pleased with this proposal, which made a good many of my difficulties disappear, and the reader will see the results of this course.

Next day snow fell in large flakes, and I went early to M. d'O——'s, where I found Esther in the highest of spirits. She gave me a warm welcome, and began to rally me on having spent the whole night with Madame Trenti.

I might possibly have shewn some slight confusion, but her father said an honest man had nothing to be ashamed of in admiring talent. Then, turning to me, he said,——

"Tell me, M. Casanova, who this woman is?"

"She is a Venetian whose husband died recently; I knew her when I was a lad, and it was six years since I had seen her last."

"You were agreeably surprised, then, to see your daughter?" said Esther.

"Why do you think the child is my daughter? Madame Trenti was married then."

"The likeness is really too strong. And how about your falling asleep yesterday when you were supping with M. Pels?"

"It was no wonder that I went asleep, as I had not closed an eye the night before."

"I am envious of anyone who possesses the secret of getting a good sleep, for I have always to wait long hours before sleep comes to me, and when I awake, instead of being refreshed, I feel heavy and languid from fatigue."

"Try passing the night in listening to one in whom you take an interest, telling the story of her life, and I promise you that you will sleep well the night after."

"There is no such person for me."

"No, because you have as yet only seen fourteen summers; but afterwards there will be someone."

"Maybe, but what I want just now is books, and the help of someone who will guide my reading."

"That would be an easy matter for anyone who knew your tastes."

"I like history and travels, but for a book to please me it must be all true, as I lay it down at the slightest suspicion of its veracity."

"Now I think I may venture to offer my services, and if you will accept them I believe I shall be able to give satisfaction."

"I accept your offer, and shall keep you to your word."

"You need not be afraid of my breaking it, and before I leave for the Hague I will prove that I am reliable."

She then began to rally me on the pleasure I should have at the Hague, where I should see Madame Trenti again. Her freedom, mirth, and extreme beauty set my blood on fire, and M. d'O—— laughed heartily at the war his charming daughter waged on me. At eleven o'clock we got into a well-appointed sleigh and we set out for his small house, where she told me I should find Mdlle. Casanova and her betrothed.

"Nevertheless," said I, "you will continue to be my only attraction."

She made no answer, but it was easy to perceive that my avowal had not displeased her.

When we had gone some distance we saw the lovers, who had come out, in spite of the snow, to meet us. We got down, and after taking off our furs we entered the house. I gazed at the young gentleman, who looked at me a moment in return and then whispered in Mdlle. Casanova's ear. She smiled and whispered something to Esther. Esther stepped up to her father and said a few words to him in a low voice, and everybody began to laugh at once. They all looked at me and I felt certain that I was somehow the point of the joke, but I put on an indifferent air.

"There may be a mistake," said M. d'O——; "at any rate we should ascertain the truth of the matter."

"M. Casanova, had you any adventures on your journey from the Hague to Amsterdam?"

At this I looked again at the young gentleman, and I guessed what they were talking about.

"No adventure to speak of," I answered, "except a meeting with a fine fellow who desired to see my carriage turn upside down into the ditch, and who I think is present now."

At these words the laughter broke out afresh, and the gentleman and I embraced each other; but after he had given the true account of the adventure his mistress pretended to be angry, and told him that he ought to have fought. Esther observed that he had shewn more true courage in listening to reason, and M. d'O—— said he was strongly of his daughter's opinion; however, Mdlle. Casanova, after airing her high-flown ideas, began to sulk with her lover.

To restore the general mirth, Esther said, gaily, "Come, come, let us put on our skates, and try the Amstel, for I am afraid that unless we go forthwith the ice will have melted." I was ashamed to ask her to let me off, though I would gladly have done so! but what will not love do! M. d'O—— left us to our own devices. Mdlle. Casanova's intended put on my skates, and the ladies put on their short petticoats with black velvet drawers to guard against certain accidents. We reached the river, and as I was a perfect neophyte in this sport the figure I cut may

be imagined. However, I resolutely determined to conquer my awkwardness, and twenty times, to the peril of my spine, did I fall down upon the ice. I should have been wiser to have left off, but I was ashamed to do so, and I did not stop till, to my huge delight, we were summoned in to dinner. But I paid dear for my obstinacy, for when I tried to rise from the table I felt as if I had lost the use of my limbs. Esther pitied me, and said she would cure me. There was a good deal of laughter at my expense, and I let them laugh, as I felt certain that the whole thing had been contrived to turn me into derision, and wishing to make Esther love me I thought it best to simulate good temper. I passed the afternoon with M. d'O——, letting the young people go by themselves on the Amstel, where they stopped till dusk.

Next morning when I awoke I thought I was a lost man. I suffered a martyrdom of pain. The last of my vertebral bones, called by doctors the *os sacrum,* felt as if it had been crushed to atoms, although I had used almost the whole of a pot of ointment which Esther had given me for that purpose. In spite of my torments I did not forget my promise, and I had myself taken to a bookseller's where I bought all the books I thought likely to interest her. She was very grateful, and told me to come and embrace her before I started if I wanted a pretty present.

It was not likely that I was going to refuse such an invitation as that, so I went early in the morning, leaving my post-chaise at the door. Her governess took me to her bed, where she was lying as fair and gay as Venus herself.

"I am quite sure," said she, "that you would not have come at all unless I had asked you to come and embrace me."

At this my lips were fastened on her mouth, her eyes, and on every spot of her lovely face. But seeing my eyes straying towards her bosom, and guessing that I should make myself master of it, she stopped laughing and put herself on the defensive.

"Go away," said she, slyly, "go away and enjoy yourself at the Hague with the fair Trenti, who possesses so pretty a token of your love."

"My dear Esther, I am going to the Hague to talk business with the ambassador, and for no other reason; and in six days at latest you will see me back again, as much your lover as before, and desiring nothing better than to please you."

"I rely upon your word of honour, but mind you do not deceive me."

With these words she put up her mouth and gave me so tender and passionate a kiss that I went away feeling certain of my bliss being crowned on my return. That evening, at supper-time, I reached Boaz's house.

CHAPTER V

MY FORTUNE IN HOLLAND—MY RETURN TO PARIS WITH YOUNG POMPEATI

Amongst the letters which were waiting for me was one from the comptroller-general, which advised me that twenty millions in Government securities had been placed in the hands of M. d'Afri, who was not to go beyond a loss of eight per cent.; and another letter from my good patron, M. de Bernis, telling me to do the best I could, and to be assured that the ambassador would be instructed to consent to whatever bargain might be made, provided the rate was not more disadvantageous than that of the exchange at Paris. Boaz, who was astonished at the bargain I had made with my shares, wanted to discount the Government securities for me, and I should very likely have agreed to his terms if he had not required me to give him three months, and the promise that the agreement should hold even in the case of peace being concluded in the meanwhile. It was not long before I saw that I should do well to get back to Amsterdam, but I did not care to break

my word to Thérèse, whom I had promised to meet at the Hague. I received a letter from her while I was at the play, and the servant who brought it told me he was waiting to conduct me to her. I sent my own servant home, and set out on my quest.

My guide made me climb to the fourth floor of a somewhat wretched house, and there I found this strange woman in a small room, attended by her son and daughter. The table stood in the midst of the room, and was covered with a black cloth, and the two candles standing upon it made it look like some sort of sepulchral altar. The Hague was a Court town. I was richly dressed; my elaborate attire made the saddest possible contrast with the gloom of my surroundings. Thérèse, dressed in black and seated between her children at that black table, reminded me of Medea. To see these two fair young creatures vowed to a lot of misery and disgrace was a sad and touching sight. I took the boy between my arms, and pressing him to my breast called him my son. His mother told him to look upon me as his father from henceforth. The lad recognized me; he remembered, much to my delight, seeing me in the May of 1753, in Venice, at Madame Manzoni's. He was slight but strong; his limbs were well proportioned, and his features intellectual. He was thirteen years old.

His sister sat perfectly still, apparently waiting for her turn to come. I took her on my knee, and

as I embraced her, nature herself seemed to tell me that she was my daughter. She took my kisses in silence, but it was easy to see that she thought herself preferred to her brother, and was charmed with the idea. All her clothing was a slight frock, and I was able to feel every limb and to kiss her pretty little body all over, delighted that so sweet a being owed her existence to me.

"Mamma, dear," said she, "is not this fine gentleman the same we saw at Amsterdam, and who was taken for my papa because I am like him? But that cannot be, for my papa is dead."

"So he is, sweetheart; but I may be your dear friend, mayn't I? Would you like to have me for a friend?"

"Yes, yes!" she cried, and throwing her arms about my neck gave me a thousand kisses, which I returned with delight.

After we had talked and laughed together we sat down at table, and the heroine Thérèse gave me a delicate supper accompanied by exquisite wines. "I have never given the margrave better fare," said she, "at those nice little suppers we used to take together."

Wishing to probe the disposition of her son, whom I had engaged to take away with me, I addressed several remarks to him, and soon discovered that he was of a false and deceitful nature, always on his guard, taking care of what he said, and con-

sequently speaking only from his head and not from his heart. Every word was delivered with a quiet politeness which, no doubt, was intended to please me.

I told him that this sort of thing was all very well on occasion; but that there were times when a man's happiness depended on his freedom from constraint; then and only then was his amiability, if he had any, displayed. His mother, thinking to praise him, told me that reserve was his chief characteristic, that she had trained him to keep his counsel at all times and places, and that she was thus used to his being reserved with her as with everyone else.

"All I can say is," said I, "your system is an abominable one. You may have strangled in their infancy all the finer qualities with which nature has endowed your son, and have fairly set him on the way to become a monster instead of an angel. I don't see how the most devoted father can possibly have any affection for a son who keeps all his emotions under lock and key."

This outburst, which proceeded from the tenderness I would fain have felt for the boy, seemed to strike his mother dumb.

"Tell me, my dear, if you feel yourself capable of shewing me that confidence which a father has a right to expect of a good son, and if you can

promise to be perfectly open and unreserved towards me?"

"I promise that I will die rather than tell you a falsehood."

"That's just like him," said the mother. I have succeeded in inspiring him with the utmost horror of untruthfulness."

"That's all very well, my dear madam, but you might have pursued a still better course, and one which would have been still more conducive to his happiness."

"What is that?"

"I will tell you. It was not necessary to make him detest a lie; you should have rather endeavoured to make him a lover of the truth by displaying it to him in all its native beauty. This is the only way to make him lovable, and love is the sole bestower of happiness in this world."

"But isn't it the same thing not to lie and to tell the truth," said the boy, with a smile which charmed his mother and displeased me.

"Certainly not; there is a great difference—for to avoid lying you have only to hold your tongue; and do you think that comes to the same thing as speaking the truth? You must open your mind to me, my son, and tell me all your thoughts, even if you blush in the recital. I will teach you how to blush, and soon you will have nothing to fear in laying open all your thoughts and deeds. When we

know each other a little longer we shall see how we agree together. You must understand that I cannot look upon you as my son until I see cause to love you, and I cannot have you call me father till you treat me as the best friend you have. You may be quite sure that I shall find a way to discover your thoughts, however cleverly you try to hide them. If I find you deceitful and suspicious I shall certainly entertain no regard for you. As soon as I have finished my business at Amsterdam we will set out for Paris. I am leaving the Hague to-morrow, and on my return I hope to find you instructed by your mother in a system of morality more consonant with my views, and more likely to lead to your happiness."

On glancing at my little daughter, who had been listening to me with the greatest attention, I saw that her eyes were swimming with tears, which she could hardly retain.

"Why are you crying?" said the mother; "it is silly to cry." And with that the child ran to her mother and threw her arms round her neck.

"Would you like to come to Paris, too?" said I to her.

"Oh, yes! But mamma must come too, as she would die without me."

"What would you do if I told you to go?" said the mother.

"I would obey you, mamma, but how could I exist away from you?"

Thereupon my little daughter pretended to cry. I say pretended, as it was quite evident that the child did not mean what she said, and I am sure that her mother knew it as well as I.

It was really a melancholy thing to see the effects of a bad education on this young child, to whom nature had given intelligence and feeling. I took the mother on one side, and said that if she had intended to make actors of her children she had succeeded to admiration; but if she wished them to become useful members of society her system had failed lamentably, as they were in a fair way to become monsters of deceit. I continued making her the most pointed remonstrances until, in spite of her efforts to control herself, she burst into tears. However, she soon recovered her composure, and begged me to stay at the Hague a day longer, but I told her it was out of the question, and left the room. I came in again a few minutes after, and Sophie came up to me and said, in a loving little voice,—

"If you are really my friend, you will give me some proof of your friendship."

"And what proof do you want my dear?"

"I want you to come and sup with me to-morrow."

"I can't, Sophie dear, for I have just said no

to your mother, and she would be offended if I granted you what I had refused her."

"Oh, no! she wouldn't; it was she who told me to ask you just now."

I naturally began to laugh, but on her mother calling the girl a little fool, and the brother adding that he had never committed such an indiscretion, the poor child began to tremble all over, and looked abashed. I reassured her as best I could, not caring whether what I said displeased her mother or not, and I endeavoured to instil into her principles of a very different nature to those in which she had been reared, while she listened with an eagernss which proved that her heart was still ready to learn the right way. Little by little her face cleared, and I saw that I had made an impression, and though I could not flatter myself that any good I might do her would be lasting in its effects as long as she remained under the bad influence of her mother, I promised to come and sup with her next evening, "but on the condition," I said, "that you give me a plain meal, and one bottle of Chambertin only, for you are not too well off."

"I know that, but mamma says that you pay for everything."

This reply made me go off into a roar of laughter; and in spite of her vexation the mother was obliged to follow my example. The poor woman, hardened by the life she led, took the child's sim-

plicity for stupidity, but I saw in her a rough diamond which only wanted polishing.

Thérèse told me that the wine did not cost her anything, as the son of the Rotterdam burgomaster furnished her with it, and that he would sup with us the next day if I would allow him to be present. I answered smilingly that I should be delighted to see him, and I went away after giving my daughter, of whom I felt fond, a tender embrace. I would have done anything to be entrusted with her, but I saw it would be no good trying to get possession of her, as the mother was evidently keeping her as a resource for her old age. This is a common way for adventuresses to look upon their daughters, and Thérèse was an adventuress in the widest acceptation of the term. I gave her twenty ducats to get clothes for my adopted son and Sophie, who, with spontaneous gratitude, and her eyes filled with tears, came and gave me a kiss. Joseph was going to kiss my hand, but I told him that it was degrading for one man to kiss another's hand, and that for the future he was to shew his gratitude by embracing me as a son embraces his father.

Just as I was leaving, Thérèse took me to the closet where the two children were sleeping. I knew what she was thinking of; but all that was over long ago; I could think of no one but Esther.

The next day I found the burgomaster's son at my actress's house. He was a fine young fellow of

twenty or twenty-one, but totally devoid of manner. He was Thérèse's lover, but he should have regulated his behaviour in my presence. Thérèse, seeing that he was posing as master of the field, and that his manners disgusted me, began to snub him, much to his displeasure, and after sneering at the poorness of the dishes, and praising the wine which he had supplied, he went out leaving us to finish our dessert by ourselves. I left myself at eleven, telling Thérèse that I should see her again before I went away. The Princess de Galitzin, a Cantimir by birth, had asked me to dinner, and this made me lose another day.

Next day I heard from Madame d'Urfé, who enclosed a bill of exchange on Boaz for twelve thousand francs. She said that she had bought her shares for sixty thousand, that she did not wish to make anything of them, and that she hoped I would accept the overplus as my broker's fee. She worded her offer with too much courtesy for me to refuse it. The remainder of the letter was devoted to the wildest fancies. She said that her genius had revealed to her that I should bring back to Paris a boy born of the Mystical Marriage, and she hoped I would take pity on her. It was a strange coincidence, and seemed likely to attach the woman still more closely to her visionary theories. I laughed when I thought how she would be impressed by

Thérèse's son, who was certainly not born of the Mystical Marriage.

Boaz paid me my twelve thousand francs in ducats, and I made him my friend, as he thanked me for receiving the moneys in ducats, and he doubtless made a profit on the transaction, gold being a commodity in Holland, and all payments being made in silver or paper money. At that time gold was at a low rate, and nobody would take ducats.

After having an excellent dinner with the Princesse de Galitzin, I put on my cloak and went to the café. I found there the burgomaster's son, who was just beginning a game of billiards. He whispered to me that I might back him with advantage, and thinking he was sure of his stroke I thanked him and followed his advice. However, after losing three games one after the other, I took his measure and began to lay against him without his knowledge. After playing for three hours and losing all the time, he stopped play and came to condole with me on my heavy loss. It is impossible to describe his amazed expression when I shewed him a handful of ducats, and assured him that I had spent a very profitable evening in laying against him. Everybody in the room began to laugh at him, but he was the sort of young man who doesn't understand a joke, and he went out in a rage. Soon after I left the billiard-room myself, and, according to my promise

went to see Thérèse, as I was leaving for Amsterdam the next day.

Thérèse was waiting for her young wine merchant, but on my recounting his adventures she expected him no longer. I took my little daughter on my knee and lavished my caresses on her, and so left them, telling them that we should see each other again in the course of three weeks or a month at latest.

As I was going home in the moonlight by myself, my sword under my arm, I was encountered all of a sudden by the poor dupe of a burgomaster's son.

"I want to know," said he, "if your sword has as sharp a point as your tongue."

I tried to quiet him by speaking common sense, and I kept my sword wrapped in my cloak, though his was bared and directed against me.

"You are wrong to take my jests in such bad part," said I; "however, I apologize to you."

"No apologies; look to yourself."

"Wait till to-morrow, you will be cooler then, but if you still wish it I will give you satisfaction in the midst of the billiard-room."

"The only satisfaction you can give me is to fight; I want to kill you."

As evidence of his determination, and to provoke me beyond recall, he struck me with the flat of his sword, the first and last time in my life in which I

have received such an insult. I drew my sword, but still hoping to bring him to his senses I kept strictly on the defensive and endeavoured to make him leave off. This conduct the Dutchman mistook for fear, and pushed hard on me, lunging in a manner that made me look to myself. His sword passed through my necktie; a quarter of an inch farther in would have done my business.

I leapt to one side, and, my danger no longer admitting of my fighting on the defensive, I lunged out and wounded him in the chest. I thought this would have been enough for him, so I proposed we should terminate our engagement.

"I'm not dead yet," said he; "I want to kill you."

This was his watchword; and, as he leapt on me in a paroxysm of rage, more like a madman than a sensible being, I hit him four times. At the fourth wound he stepped back, and, saying he had had enough, begged me to leave him.

I went off as fast as I could, and was very glad to see from the look of my sword that his wounds were slight. I found Boaz still up, and on hearing what had taken place he advised me to go to Amsterdam at once, though I assured him that the wounds were not mortal. I gave in to his advice, and as my carriage was at the saddler's he lent me his, and I set out, bidding my servant to come on the next day with my luggage, and to rejoin me at the

"Old Bible," in Amsterdam. I reached Amsterdam at noon and my man arrived in the evening.

I was curious to hear if my duel had made any noise, but as my servant had left at an early hour he had heard nothing about it. Fortunately for me nothing whatever was known about it at Amsterdam for a week after; otherwise, things might not have gone well with me, as the reputation of being a duellist is not a recommendation to financiers with whom one is about to transact business of importance.

The reader will not be surprised when I tell him that my first call was on M. d'O——, or rather on his charming daughter Esther, for she it was on whom I waited. It will be remembered that the way in which we parted did a good deal towards augmenting the warmth of my affection for her. On entering the room I found Esther writing at a table.

"What are you doing, Esther, dear?"

"An arithmetical problem."

"Do you like problems?"

"I am passionately fond of anything which contains difficulties and offers curious results."

"I will give you something which will please you."

I made her, by way of jest, two magic squares, which delighted her. In return, she shewed me some trifles with which I was well acquainted, but which I pretended to think very astonishing. My good genius then inspired me with the idea of trying di-

vination by the cabala. I told her to ask a question in writing, and assured her that by a certain kind of calculation a satisfactory answer would be obtained. She smiled, and asked why I had returned to Amsterdam so soon. I shewed her how to make the pyramid with the proper numbers and the other ceremonies, then I made her extract the answer in numbers, translating it into French, and greatly was she surprised to find that the cause which had made me return to Amsterdam so soon was—love.

Quite confounded, she said it was very wonderful, even though the answer might not be true, and she wished to know what masters could teach this mode of calculation.

"Those who know it cannot teach it to anyone."

"How did you learn it, then?"

"From a precious manuscript I inherited from my father."

"Sell it me."

"I have burnt it; and I am not empowered to communicate the secret to anyone before I reach the age of fifty."

"Why fifty?"

"I don't know; but I do know that if I communicated it to anyone before that age I should run the risk of losing it myself. The elementary spirit who is attached to the oracle would leave it."

"How do you know that?"

"I saw it so stated in the manuscript I have spoken of."

"Then you are able to discover all secrets?"

"Yes, or I should be if the replies were not sometimes too obscure to be understood."

"As it does not take much time, will you be kind enough to get me an answer to another question?"

"With pleasure; you can command me in anything not forbidden by my familiar spirit."

She asked what her destiny would be, and the oracle replied that she had not yet taken the first step towards it. Esther was astonished and called her governess to see the two answers, but the good woman saw nothing wonderful in them whatever. Esther impatiently called her a blockhead, and entreated me to let her ask another question. I begged her to do so, and she asked,—

"Who loves me most in Amsterdam?" The oracle replied that no one loved her as well as he who had given her being. Poor Esther then told me that I had made her miserable, and that she would die of grief if she could not succeed in learning the method of calculation. I gave no answer, and pretended to feel sad at heart. She began to write down another question, putting her hand in front so as to screen the paper. I rose as if to get out of her way, but while she was arranging the pyramid I cast my eyes on the paper whilst walking up

and down the room, and read her question. After she had gone as far as I had taught her, she asked me to extract the answer, saying that I could do so without reading the question. I agreed to do so on the condition that she would not ask a second time.

As I had seen her question, it was easy for me to answer it. She had asked the oracle if she might shew the questions she had propounded to her father, and the answer was that *she would be happy as long as she had no secrets from her father.*

When she read these words she gave a cry of surprise, and could find no words wherewith to express her gratitude to me. I left her for the Exchange, where I had a long business conversation with M. Pels.

Next morning a handsome and gentlemanly man came with a letter of introduction from Thérèse, who told me that he would be useful in case I wanted any assistance in business. His name was Rigerboos. She informed me that the burgomaster's son was only slightly wounded, and that I had nothing to fear as the matter was not generally known, and that if I had business at the Hague I might return there in perfect safety. She said that my little Sophie talked of me all day, and that I should find my son much improved on my return. I asked M. Rigerboos to give me his address, assuring him that at the proper time I should rely on his services.

A moment after Rigerboos had gone, I got a

short note from Esther, who begged me, in her father's name, to spend the day with her—at least, if I had no important engagement. I answered that, excepting a certain matter of which her father knew, I had no chiefer aim than to convince her that I desired a place in her heart, and that she might be quite sure that I would not refuse her invitation.

I went to M. d'O—— at dinner time. I found Esther and her father puzzling over the method which drew reasonable answers out of a pyramid of numbers. As soon as her father saw me, he embraced me, saying how happy he was to possess a daughter capable of attracting me.

"She will attract any man who has sufficient sense to appreciate her."

"You appreciate her, then?"

"I worship her."

"Then embrace her."

Esther opened her arms, and with a cry of delight threw them round my neck, and gave me back all my caresses, kiss for kiss.

"I have got through all my business," said M. d'O——, "and the rest of my day is at your disposal. I have known from my childhood that there is such a science as the one you profess, and I was acquainted with a Jew who by its aid made an immense fortune. He, like you, said that, under pain of losing the secret, it could only be communicated

to one person, but he put off doing so so long that at last it was too late, for a high fever carried him off in a few days. I hope you will not do as the Jew did; but in the meanwhile allow me to say that if you do not draw a profit from this treasure, you do not know what it really is."

"You call this knowledge of mine a treasure, and yet you possess one far more excellent," looking at Esther as I spoke.

"We will discuss that again. Yes, sir, I call your science a treasure."

"But the answers of the oracle are often very obscure."

"Obscure! The answers my daughter received are as clear as day."

"Apparently, she is fortunate in the way she frames her questions; for on this the reply depends."

"After dinner we will try if I am so fortunate—at least, if you will be so kind as to help me."

"I can refuse you nothing, as I consider father and daughter as one being."

At table we discussed other subjects, as the chief clerks were present—notably the manager, a vulgar-looking fellow, who had very evident aspirations in the direction of my fair Esther. After dinner we went into M. d'O——'s private closet, and thereupon he drew two long questions out of his pocket. In the first he desired to know how to obtain a favourable decision from the States-General in an im-

portant matter, the details of which he explained. I replied in terms, the obscurity of which would have done credit to a professed Pythoness, and I left Esther to translate the answer into common sense, and find a meaning in it.

With regard to the second answer I acted in a different manner; I was impelled to answer clearly, and did so. M. d'O—— asked what had become of a vessel belonging to the India Company of which nothing had been heard. It was known to have started on the return voyage, and should have arrived two months ago, and this delay gave rise to the supposition that it had gone down. M. d'O—— wished to know if it were still above water, or whether it were lost, etc. As no tidings of it had come to hand, the company were on the look-out for someone to insure it, and offered ten per cent., but nobody cared to run so great a risk, especially as a letter had been received from an English sea captain who said he had seen her sink.

I may confess to my readers, though I did not do so to M. d'O——, that with inexplicable folly I composed an answer that left no doubt as to the safety of the vessel, pronouncing it safe and sound, and that we should hear of it in a few days. No doubt I felt the need of exalting my oracle, but this method was likely to destroy its credit for ever. In truth, if I had guessed M. d'O——'s design, I would

have curbed my vanity, for I had no wish to make him lose a large sum without profiting myself.

The answer made him turn pale, and tremble with joy. He told us that secrecy in the matter was of the last importance, as he had determined to insure the vessel and drive a good bargain. At this, dreading the consequences, I hastened to tell him that for all I knew there might not be a word of truth in the oracle's reply, and that I should die of grief if I were the involuntary cause of his losing an enormous sum of money through relying on an oracle, the hidden sense of which might be completely opposed to the literal translation.

"Have you ever been deceived by it?"

"Often."

Seeing my distress, Esther begged her father to take no further steps in the matter. For some moments nobody spoke.

M. d'O—— looked thoughtful and full of the project which his fancy had painted in such gay colours. He said a good deal about it, dwelling on the mystic virtues of numbers, and told his daughter to read out all the questions she had addressed to the oracle with the answers she had received. There were six or seven of them, all briefly worded, some direct and some equivocal. Esther, who had constructed the pyramids, had shone, with my potent assistance, in extracting the answers, which I had really invented, and her father, in the joy of his

heart, seeing her so clever, imagined that she would become an adept in the science by the force of intelligence. The lovely Esther, who was much taken with the trifle, was quite ready to be of the same opinion.

After passing several hours in the discussion of the answers, which my host thought divine, we had supper, and at parting M. d'O—— said that as Sunday was a day for pleasure and not business he hoped I would honour them by passing the day at their pretty house on the Amstel, and they were delighted at my accepting their invitation.

I could not help pondering over the mysteries of the commercial mind, which narrows itself down to considerations of profit and loss. M. d'O—— was decidedly an honest man; but although he was rich, he was by no means devoid of the greed incident to his profession. I asked myself the question, how a man, who would consider it dishonourable to steal a ducat, or to pick one up in the street and keep it, knowing to whom it belonged, could reconcile it with his conscience to make an enormous profit by insuring a vessel of the safety of which he was perfectly certain, as he believed the oracle infallible. Such a transaction was certainly fraudulent, as it is dishonest to play when one is certain of winning.

As I was going home I passed a tea-garden, and seeing a good many people going in and coming out I went in curious to know how these places were managed in Holland. Great heavens! I found my-

self the witness of an orgy, the scene a sort of cellar, a perfect cesspool of vice and debauchery. The discordant noise of the two or three instruments which formed the orchestra struck gloom to the soul and added to the horrors of the cavern. The air was dense with the fumes of bad tobacco, and vapours reeking of beer and garlic issued from every mouth. The company consisted of sailors, men of the lowest-class, and a number of vile women. The sailors and the dregs of the people thought this den a garden of delight, and considered its pleasures compensation for the toils of the sea and the miseries of daily labour. There was not a single woman there whose aspect had anything redeeming about it. I was looking at the repulsive sight in silence, when a great hulking fellow, whose appearance suggested the blacksmith, and his voice the blackguard, came up to me and asked me in bad Italian if I would like to dance. I answered in the negative, but before leaving me he pointed out a Venetian woman who, he said, would oblige me if I gave her some drink.

Wishing to discover if she was anyone I knew I looked at her attentively, and seemed to recollect her features, although I could not decide who she could be. Feeling rather curious on the subject I sat down next to her, and asked if she came from Venice, and if she had left that country some time ago.

"Nearly eighteen years," she replied.

I ordered a bottle of wine, and asked if she would take any; she said yes, and added, if I liked, she would oblige me.

"I haven't time," I said; and I gave the poor wretch the change I received from the waiter. She was full of gratitude, and would have embraced me if I had allowed her.

"Do you like being at Amsterdam better than Venice?" I asked.

"Alas, no! for if I were in my own country I should not be following this dreadful trade."

"How old were you when you left Venice."

"I was only fourteen and lived happily with my father and mother, who now may have died of grief."

"Who seduced you?"

"A rascally footman."

"In what part of Venice did you live?"

"I did not live in Venice, but at Friuli, not far off."

Friuli . . . eighteen years ago . . . a footman . . . I felt moved, and looking at the wretched woman more closely I soon recognized in her Lucie of Pasean. I cannot describe my sorrow, which I concealed as best I could, and tried hard to keep up my indifferent air. A life of debauchery rather than the flight of time had tarnished her beauty, and ruined the once exquisite outlines of her form. Lucie, that innocent and pretty maiden, grown ugly, vile, a common prostitute! It was a dreadful

thought. She drank like a sailor, without looking at me, and without caring who I was. I took a few ducats from my purse, and slipped them into her hand, and without waiting for her to find out how much I had given her I left that horrible den.

I went to bed full of saddening thoughts. Not even under the Leads did I pass so wretched a day. I thought I must have risen under some unhappy star! I loathed myself. With regard to Lucie I felt the sting of remorse, but at the thought of M. d'O—— I hated myself. I considered that I should cause him a loss of three or four hundred thousand florins; and the thought was a bitter drop in the cup of my affection for Esther. I fancied she, as well as her father, would become my implacable foe; and love that is not returned is no love at all.

I spent a dreadful night. Lucie, Esther, her father, their hatred of me, and my hatred of myself, were the groundwork of my dreams. I saw Esther and her father, if not ruined, at all events impoverished by my fault, and Lucie only thirty-two years old, and already deep in the abyss of vice, with an infinite prospect of misery and shame before her. The dawn was welcome indeed, for with its appearance a calm came to my spirit; it is the darkness which is terrible to a heart full of remorse.

I got up and dressed myself in my best, and went in a coach to do my suit to the Princesse de Galitzin, who was staying at the "Etoile d'Orient."

I found her out; she had gone to the Admiralty. I went there, and found her accompanied by M. de Reissak and the Count de Tot, who had just received news of my friend Pesselier, at whose house I made his acquaintance, and who was dangerously ill when I left Paris.

I sent away my coach and began to walk towards M. d'O——'s house on the Amsel. The extreme elegance of my costume was displeasing in the eyes of the Dutch populace, and they hissed and hooted me, after the manner of the mob all the world over. Esther saw me coming from the window, drew the rope, and opened the door. I ran in, shut the door behind me, and as I was going up the wooden staircase, on the fourth or fifth step my foot struck against some yielding substance. I looked down and saw a green pocket-book. I stooped down to pick it up, but was awkward enough to send it through an opening in the stairs, which had been doubtless made for the purpose of giving light to a stair below. I did not stop, but went up the steps and was received with the usual hospitality, and on their expressing some wonder as to the unusual brilliance of my attire I explained the circumstances of the case. Esther smiled and said I looked quite another person, but I saw that both father and daughter were sad at heart. Esther's governess came in and said something to her in Dutch, at which, in evident distress, she ran and embraced her father.

"I see, my friends, that something has happened to you. If my presence is a restraint, treat me without ceremony, and bid me go."

"It's not so great an ill-hap after all; I have enough money left to bear the loss patiently."

"If I may ask the question, what is the nature of your loss?"

"I have lost a green pocket-book containing a good deal of money, which if I had been wise I would have left behind, as I did not require it till to-morrow."

"And you don't know where you lost it?"

"It must have been in the street, but I can't imagine how it can have happened. It contained bills of exchange for large amounts, and of course they don't matter, as I can stop payment of them, but there were also notes of the Bank of England for heavy sums, and they are gone, as they are payable to the bearer. Let us give thanks to God, my dear child, that it is no worse, and pray to Him to preserve to us what remains, and above all to keep us in good health. I have had much heavier losses than this, and I have been enabled not only to bear the misfortune but to make up the loss. Let us say no more about the matter."

While he was speaking my heart was full of joy, but I kept up the sadness befitting the scene. I had not the slightest doubt that the pocket-book in question was the one I had unluckily sent through

the staircase, but which could not be lost irretrievably. My first point was how to make capital of my grand discovery in the interests of my cabalistic science. It was too fine an opportunity to be lost, especially as I still felt the sting of having been the cause of an enormous loss to the worthy man. I would give them a grand proof of the infallibility of my oracle: how many miracles are done in the same way! The thought put me into a good humour. I began to crack jokes, and my jests drew peals of laughter from Esther.

We had an excellent dinner and choice wine. After we had taken coffee I said that if they liked we would have a game of cards, but Esther said that this would be a waste of time, as she would much prefer making the oracular pyramids. This was exactly what I wanted.

"With all my heart," I said. "We will do as you suggest."

"Shall I ask where my father lost his pocket-book?"

"Why not? It's a plain question: write it down."

She made the pyramid, and the reply was that the pocket-book had not been found by anyone. She leapt up from her seat, danced for joy, and threw her arms round her father's neck, saying,—

"We shall find it, we shall find it, papa!"

"I hope so, too, my dear; that answer is really

very consoling." Wherewith Esther gave her father one kiss after another.

"Yes," said I, "there is certainly ground for hope, but the oracle will be dumb to all questions." . . .

"Dumb! Why?"

"I was going to say it will be dumb if you do not give me as many kisses as you have given your father."

"Oh, then I will soon make it speak!" said she, laughing; and throwing her arms about my neck she began to kiss me, and I to give her kisses in return.

Ah! what happy days they seem when I recall them; and still I like dwelling on these days despite my sad old age, the foe of love. When I recall these events I grow young again and feel once more the delights of youth, despite the long years which separate me from that happy time.

At last Esther sat down again, and asked, "Where is the pocket-book?" And the pyramid told her that the pocket-book had fallen through the opening in the fifth step of the staircase.

M. d'O—— said to his daughter,—

"Come, my dear Esther, let us go and test the truth of the oracle." And full of joy and hope they went to the staircase, I following them, and M. d'O—— shewed her the hole through which the pocketbook must have fallen. He lighted a candle and we

went down to the cellar, and before long he picked up the book, which had fallen into some water. We went up again in high spirits, and there we talked for over an hour as seriously as you please on the divine powers of the oracle, which, according to them, should render its possessor the happiest of mortals.

He opened the pocket-book and shewed us the four thousand pound notes. He gave two to his daughter, and made me take the two remaining; but I took them with one hand and with the other gave them to Esther, begging her to keep them for me; but before she would agree to do so I had to threaten her with the stoppage of the famous cabalistic oracle. I told M. d'O—— that all I asked was his friendship, and thereon he embraced me, and swore to be my friend to the death.

By making the fair Esther the depositary of my two thousand pounds, I was sure of winning her affection by an appeal, not to her interest, but to her truthfulness. This charming girl had about her so powerful an attraction that I felt as if my life was wound up with hers.

I told M. d'O—— that my chief object was to negotiate the twenty millions at a small loss.

"I hope to be of service to you in the matter," he said, "but as I shall often want to speak to you, you must come and live in our house, which you must look upon as your own."

"My presence will be a restraint on you. I shall be a trouble."

"Ask Esther."

Esther joined her entreaties to her father's and I gave in, taking good care not to let them see how pleased I was. I contented myself with expressing my gratitude, to which they answered that it was I who conferred a favour.

M. d'O—— went into his closet, and as soon as I found myself alone with Esther I kissed her tenderly, saying that I should not be happy till I had won her heart.

"Do you love me?"

"Dearly, and I will do all in my power to shew how well I love you, if you will love me in return."

She gave me her hand, which I covered with kisses, and she went on to say, "As soon as you come and live with us, you must look out for a good opportunity for asking my hand of my father. You need not be afraid he will refuse you, but the first thing for you to do is to move into our house."

"My dear little wife! I will come to-morrow."

We said many sweet things to one another, talked about the future, and told each other our inmost thoughts; and I was undoubtedly truly in love, for not a single improper fancy rose in my mind in the presence of my dear who loved me so well.

The first thing that M. d'O—— said on his

return was, that there would be a piece of news on the Exchange the next day.

"What is that, papa dear?"

"I have decided to take the whole risk—amounting to three hundred thousand florins—of the ship which is thought to have gone down. They will call me mad, but they themselves will be the madmen; which is what I should be if, after the proof we have had, I doubted the oracle any more."

"My dear sir, you make me frightened. I have told you that I have been often deceived by the oracle."

"That must have been, my dear fellow, when the reply was obscure, and you did not get at the real sense of it; but in the present case there is no room for doubt. I shall make three million florins, or, if the worst comes to the worse, my loss won't ruin me."

Esther, whom the finding of the pocket-book had made enthusiastic, told her father to lose no time. As for me, I could not recall what I had done, but I was again overwhelmed with sadness. M. d'O—— saw it, and taking my hand said, "If the oracle does lie this time, I shall be none the less your friend."

"I am glad to hear it," I answered; "but as this is a matter of the utmost importance, let me consult the oracle a second time before you risk your three hundred thousand florins." This proposition pleased the father and daughter highly; they could

not express their gratitude to me for being so careful of their interests.

What followed was truly surprising—enough to make one believe in fatality. My readers probably will not believe it; but as these Memoirs will not be published till I have left this world, it would be of no use for me to disguise the truth in any way, especially as the writing of them is only the amusement of my leisure hours. Well, let him who will believe it: this is absolutely what happened. I wrote down the question myself, erected the pyramid, and carried out all the magical ceremonies without letting Esther have a hand in it. I was delighted to be able to check an act of extreme imprudence, and I was determined to do so. A double meaning, which I knew how to get, would abate M. d'O——'s courage and annihilate his plans. I had thought over what I wanted to say, and I thought I had expressed it properly in the numbers. With that idea, as Esther knew the alphabet perfectly well, I let her extract the answer, and transfer it into letters. What was my surprise when I heard her read these words:

"In a matter of this kind neither fear nor hesitate. Your repentance would be too hard for you to bear."

That was enough. Father and daughter ran to embrace me, and M. d'O—— said that when the vessel was sighted a tithe of the profits should be mine. My surprise prevented me giving any answer;

I had intended to write *trust* and *hazard,* and I had written *fear* and *hesitate.* But thanks to his prejudice, M. d'O—— only saw in my silence confirmation of the infallibility of the oracle. In short, I could do nothing more, and I took my leave leaving everything to the care of chance, who sometimes is kind to us in spite of ourselves.

The next morning I took up my abode in a splendid suite of rooms in Esther's house, and the day after I took her to a concert, where she joked with me on the grief I should endure on account of the absence of Madame Trenti and my daughter. Esther was the only mistress of my soul. I lived but to adore her, and I should have satisfied my love had not Esther been a girl of good principles. I could not gain possession of her, and was full of longing and desire.

Four or five days after my installation in my new quarters, M. d'O—— communicated to me the result of a conference which he had had with M. Pels and six other bankers on the twenty millions. They offered ten millions in hard cash and seven millions in paper money, bearing interest at five or six per cent., with a deduction of one per cent. brokerage. Furthermore, they would forgive a sum of twelve hundred thousand florins owed by the French India Company to the Dutch Company.

With such conditions I could not venture to decide on my own responsibility, although, person-

ally, I thought them reasonable enough, the impoverished state of the French treasury being taken into consideration. I sent copies of the proposal to M. de Boulogne and M. d'Afri, begging from them an immediate reply. At the end of a week I received an answer in the writing of M. de Courteil, acting for M. de Boulogne, instructing me to refuse absolutely any such proposal, and to report myself at Paris if I saw no chance of making a better bargain. I was again informed that peace was imminent, though the Dutch were quite of another opinion.

In all probability I should have immediately left for Paris, but for a circumstance which astonished nobody but myself in the family of which I had become a member. The confidence of M. d'O—— increased every day, and as if chance was determined to make me a prophet in spite of myself, news was received of the ship which was believed to be lost, and which, on the faith of my oracle, M. d'O—— had bought for three hundred thousand florins. The vessel was at Madeira. The joy of Esther, and still more my own, may be imagined when we saw the worthy man enter the house triumphantly with confirmation of the good news.

"I have insured the vessel from Madeira to the mouth of the Texel for a trifle," said he, "and so," turning to me, "you may count from this moment

on the tenth part of the profit, which I owe entirely to you."

The reader may imagine my delight; but there is one thing he will not imagine, unless he knows my character better than I do myself, the confusion into which I was thrown by the following remarks:

"You are now rich enough," said M. d'O——, "to set up for yourself amongst us, and you are positively certain to make an enormous fortune in a short time merely by making use of your cabala. I will be your agent; let us live together, and if you like my daughter as she likes you, you can call yourself my son as soon as you please."

In Esther's face shone forth joy and happiness, and in mine, though I adored her, there was to be seen, alas! nothing but surprise. I was stupid with happiness and the constraint in which I held myself. I did not analyze my feelings, but, though I knew it not, there can be no doubt that my insuperable objection to the marriage tie was working within my soul. A long silence followed; and at last, recovering my powers of speech, I succeeded, with an effort, in speaking to them of my gratitude, my happiness, my love, and I ended by saying that, in spite of my affection for Esther, I must, before settling in Holland, return to Paris, and discharge the confidential and responsible duty which the Government had placed in my hands. I would then return to Amsterdam perfectly independent.

This long peroration won their approval. Esther was quite pleased, and we spent the rest of the day in good spirits. Next day M. d'O—— gave a splendid dinner to several of his friends, who congratulated him on his good fortune, being persuaded that his courageous action was to be explained by his having had secret information of the safety of the vessel, though none of them could see from what source he, and he only, had obtained it.

A week after this lucky event he gave me an ultimatum on the matter of the twenty millions, in which he guaranteed that France should not lose more than nine per cent in the transaction.

I immediately sent a copy of his proposal to M. d'Afri, begging him to be as prompt as possible, and another copy to the comptroller-general, with a letter in which I warned him that the thing would certainly fall through if he delayed a single day in sending full powers to M. d'Afri to give me the necessary authority to act.

I wrote to the same effect to M. de Courteil and the Duc de Choiseul, telling them that I was to receive no brokerage; but that I should all the same accept a proposal which I thought a profitable one, and saying that I had no doubt of obtaining my expenses from the French Government.

As it was a time of rejoicing with us, M. d'O—— thought it would be a good plan to give a

ball. All the most distinguished people in Amsterdam were invited to it. The ball and supper were of the most splendid description, and Esther, who was a blaze of diamonds, danced all the quadrilles with me, and charmed every beholder by her grace and beauty.

I spent all my time with Esther, and every day we grew more and more in love, and more unhappy, for we were tormented by abstinence, which irritated while it increased our desires.

Esther was an affectionate mistress, but discreet rather by training than disposition the favours she accorded me were of the most insignificant description. She was lavish of nothing but her kisses, but kisses are rather irritating than soothing. I used to be nearly wild with love. She told me, like other virtuous women, that if she agreed to make me happy she was sure I would not marry her, and that as soon as I made her my wife she would be mine and mine only. She did not think I was married, for I had given her too many assurances to the contrary, but she thought I had a strong attachment to someone in Paris. I confessed that she was right, and said that I was going there to put an end to it that I might be bound to her alone. Alas! I lied when I said so, for Esther was inseparable from her father, a man of forty, and I could not make up my mind to pass the remainder of my days in Holland.

Ten or twelve days after sending the ultimatum,

I received a letter from M. de Boulogne informing me that M. d'Afri had all necessary instructions for effecting the exchange of the twenty millions, and another letter from the ambassador was to the same effect. He warned me to take care that everything was right, as he should not part with the securities before receiving 18,200,000 francs in current money.

The sad time of parting at last drew near, amid many regrets and tears from all of us. Esther gave me the two thousand pounds I had won so easily, and her father at my request gave me bills of exchange to the amount of a hundred thousand florins, with a note of two hundred thousand florins authorizing me to draw upon him till the whole sum was exhausted. Just as I was going, Esther gave me fifty shirts and fifty handkerchiefs of the finest quality.

It was not my love for Manon Baletti, but a foolish vanity and a desire to cut a figure in the luxurious city of Paris, which made me leave Holland. But such was the disposition that Mother Nature had given me that fifteen months under the Leads had not been enough to cure this mental malady of mine. But when I reflect upon after events of my life I am not astonished that The Leads proved ineffectual, for the numberless vicissitudes which I have gone through since have not cured me—my disorder, indeed, being of the incurable kind. There is no such thing as destiny. We

ourselves shape our lives, notwithstanding that saying of the Stoics, *Volentem ducit, nolentem trahit.*

After promising Esther to return before the end of the year, I set out with a clerk of the company who had brought the French securities, and I reached the Hague, where Boaz received me with a mingled air of wonder and admiration. He told me that I had worked a miracle; "but," he added, "to succeed thus you must have persuaded them that peace was on the point of being concluded."

"By no means," I answered; "so far from my persuading them, they are of the opposite opinion; but all the same I may tell you that peace is really imminent."

"If you like to give me that assurance in writing," said he, "I will make you a present of fifty thousand florins' worth of diamonds."

"Well," I answered, "the French ambassador is of the same opinion as myself; but I don't think the certainty is sufficiently great as yet for you to risk your diamonds upon it."

Next day I finished my business with the ambassador, and the clerk returned to Amsterdam.

I went to supper at Thérèse's, and found her children very well dressed. I told her to go on to Rotterdam the next day and wait for me there with her son, as I had no wish to give scandal at the Hague.

At Rotterdam, Thérèse told me that she knew

I had won half a million at Amsterdam, and that her fortune would be made if she could leave Holland for London. She had instructed Sophie to tell me that my good luck was the effect of the prayers she had addressed to Heaven on my behalf. I saw where the land lay, and I enjoyed a good laugh at the mother's craft and the child's piety, and gave her a hundred ducats, telling her that she should have another hundred when she wrote to me from London. It was very evident that she thought the sum a very moderate one, but I would not give her any more. She waited for the moment when I was getting into my carriage to beg me to give her another hundred ducats, and I said, in a low tone, that she should have a thousand if she would give me her daughter. She thought it over for a minute, and then said that she could not part with her.

"I know very well why," I answered; and drawing a watch from my fob I gave it to Sophie, embraced her, and went on my way. I arrived at Paris on February 10th, and took sumptuous apartments near the Rue Montorgueil.

CHAPTER VI

I MEET WITH A FLATTERING RECEPTION FROM MY PATRON—MADAME D'URFÉ'S INFATUATION—MADAME X. C. V. AND HER FAMILY—MADAME DU RUMAIN.

During my journey from the Hague to Paris, short as it was, I had plenty of opportunities for seeing that the mental qualities of my adopted son were by no means equal to his physical ones.

As I had said, the chief point which his mother had impressed on him was reserve, which she had instilled into him out of regard for her own interests. My readers will understand what I mean, but the child, in following his mother's instructions, had gone beyond the bounds of moderation; he possessed reserve, it is true, but he was also full of dissimulation, suspicion, and hypocrisy—a fine trio of deceit in one who was still a boy. He not only concealed what he knew, but he pretended to know that which he did not. His idea of the one quality necessary to success in life was an impenetrable reserve, and to obtain this he had accustomed himself to silence the

dictates of his heart, and to say no word that had not been carefully weighed. Giving other people wrong impressions passed with him for discretion, and his soul being incapable of a generous thought, he seemed likely to pass through life without knowing what friendship meant.

Knowing that Madame d'Urfé counted on the boy for the accomplishment of her absurd hypostasis, and that the more mystery I made of his birth the more extravagant would be her fancies about it, I told the lad that if I introduced him to a lady who questioned him by himself about his birth, he was to be perfectly open with her.

On my arrival at Paris my first visit was to my patron, whom I found in grand company, amongst whom I recognized the Venetian ambassador, who pretended not to know me.

"How long have you been in Paris?" said the minister, taking me by the hand.

"I have only just stepped out of my chaise."

"Then go to Versailles. You will find the Duc de Choiseul and the comptroller-general there. You have been wonderfully successful, go and get your meed of praise and come and see me afterwards. Tell the duke that Voltaire's appointment to be a gentleman-in-ordinary to the king is ready."

I was not going to start for Versailles at midday, but ministers in Paris are always talking in this style, as if Versailles were at the end of the

street. Instead of going there, I went to see Madame d'Urfé.

She received me with the words that her genius had informed her that I should come to-day, and that she was delighted with the fulfilment of the prophecy.

"Corneman tells me that you have been doing wonders in Holland; but I see more in the matter than he does, as I am quite certain that you have taken over the twenty millions yourself. The funds have risen, and a hundred millions at least will be in circulation in the course of the next week. You must not be offended at my shabby present, for, of course, twelve thousand francs are nothing to you. You must look upon them as a little token of friendship."

"I am going to tell my servants to close all the doors, for I am too glad to see you not to want to have you all to myself."

A profound bow was the only reply I made to this flattering speech, and I saw her tremble with joy when I told her that I had brought a lad of twelve with me, whom I intended to place in the best school I could find that he might have a good education.

"I will send him myself to Viar, where my nephews are. What is his name? Where is he? I know well what this boy is, I long to see him.

Why did you not alight from your journey at my house?"

Her questions and replies followed one another in rapid succession. I should have found it impossible to get in a word edgeways, even if I had wanted to, but I was very glad to let her expend her enthusiasm, and took good care not to interrupt her. On the first opportunity, I told her that I should have the pleasure of presenting the young gentleman to her the day after to-morrow, as on the morrow I had an engagement at Versailles.

"Does the dear lad speak French? While I am arranging for his going to school you must really let him come and live with me."

"We will discuss that question on the day after to-morrow, madam."

"Oh, how I wish the day after to-morrow was here!"

On leaving Madame d'Urfé I went to my lottery office and found everything in perfect order. I then went to the Italian play, and found Silvia and her daughter in their dressing-room.

"My dear friend," said she when she saw me, "I know that you have achieved a wonderful success in Holland, and I congratulate you."

"I gave her an agreeable surprise by saying that I had been working for her daughter, and Marion herself blushed, and lowered her eyes in a very suggestive manner. "I will be with you at supper,"

I added, "and then we can talk at our ease." On leaving them I went to the amphitheatre, and what was my surprise to see in one of the first boxes Madame X—— C—— V——, with all her family. My readers will be glad to hear their history.

Madame X—— C—— V——, by birth a Greek, was the widow of an Englishman, by whom she had six children, four of whom were girls. On his death-bed he became a Catholic out of deference to the tears of his wife; but as his children could not inherit his forty thousand pounds invested in England, without conforming to the Church of England, the family returned to London, where the widow complied with all the obligations of the law of England. What will people not do when their interests are at stake! though in a case like this there is no need to blame a person for yielding to prejudices which had the sanction of the law.

It was now the beginning of the year 1758, and five years before, when I was at Padua, I fell in love with the eldest daughter, but a few months after, when we were at Venice, Madame X—— C—— V—— thought good to exclude me from her family circle. The insult which the mother put upon me was softened by the daughter, who wrote me a charming letter, which I love to read even now. I may as well confess that my grief was the easier to bear as my time was taken up by my fair nun, M—— M——, and my dear C—— C—. Never-

theless, Mdlle. X—— C—— V——, though only fifteen, was of a perfect beauty, and was all the more charming in that to her physical advantages she joined those of a cultured mind.

Count Algarotti, the King of Prussia's chamberlain, gave her lessons, and several young nobles were among her suitors, her preference apparently being given to the heir of the family of Memmo de St. Marcuola. He died a year afterwards, while he was procurator.

My surprise at seeing this family at such a time and place may be imagined. Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— saw me directly, and pointed me out to her mother, who made a sign to me with her fan to come to their box.

She received me in the friendliest manner possible, telling me that we were not at Venice now, and that she hoped I would often come and see them at the "Hotel de Bretagne," in the Rue St. André des Arts. I told them that I did not wish to recall any events which might have happened at Venice, and her daughter having joined her entreaties to those of her mother, I promised to accept their invitation.

Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— struck me as prettier than ever; and my love, after sleeping for five years, awoke to fresh strength and vigour. They told me that they were going to pass six months at Paris before returning to Venice. In

return I informed them that I intended making Paris my home, that I had just left Holland, that I was going to Versailles the next day, so that I could not pay my respects to them till the day after. I also begged them to accept my services, in a manner which let them know I was a person of some importance.

Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— said that she was aware that the results of my Dutch mission should render me dear to France, that she had always lived in hopes of seeing me once more, that my famous flight from The Leads had delighted them; "for," she added, "we have always been fond of you."

"I fancy your mother has kept her fondness for me very much to herself," I whispered to her.

"We won't say anything about that," said she in the same tone. "We learnt all the circumstances of your wonderful flight from a letter of sixteen pages you wrote to M. Memmo. We trembled with joy and shuddered with fear as we read it."

"How did you know I have been in Holland?"

"M. de la Popelinière told us about it yesterday."

M. de la Popelinière, the *fermier-général,* whom I had known seven years ago at Passi, came into the box just as his name was spoken. After complimenting me he said that if I could carry through

the same operation for the India Company my fortune would be made.

"My advice to you is," he said, "to get yourself naturalized before it becomes generally known that you have made half a million of money."

"Half a million! I only wish I had!"

"You must have made that at the lowest calculation."

"On the contrary, I give you my assurance, that if my claim for brokerage is not allowed, the transaction will prove absolutely ruinous to me."

"Ah! no doubt you are right to take that tone. Meanwhile, everyone wants to make your acquaintance, for France is deeply indebted to you. You have caused the funds to recover in a very marked degree."

After the play was over I went to Silvia's, where I was received as if I had been the favourite child of the family; but on the other hand I gave them certain proofs that I wished to be regarded in that light. I was impressed with the idea that to their unshaken friendship I owed all my good luck, and I made the father, mother, the daughter, and the two sons, receive the presents I had got for them. The best was for the mother, who handed it on to her daughter. It was a pair of diamond ear-rings of great beauty, for which I had given fifteen thousand francs. Three days af-

ter I sent her a box containing fine linen from Holland, and choice Mechlin and Alençon lace. Mario, who liked smoking, got a gold pipe; the father a choice gold and enamelled snuff-box, and I gave a repeater to the younger son, of whom I was very fond. I shall have occasion later on to speak of this lad, whose natural qualities were far superior to his position in life. But, you will ask, was I rich enough to make such presents? No, I was not, and I knew it perfectly well; but I gave these presents because I was afraid of not being able to do so if I waited.

I set out for Versailles at day-break, and M. de Choiseul received me as before, his hair was being dressed, but for a moment he laid down his pen, which shewed that I had become a person of greater importance in his eyes. After a slight but grateful compliment, he told me that if I thought myself capable of negociating a loan of a hundred millions to bear interest at four per cent., he would do all in his power to help me. My answer was that I would think it over when I heard how much I was to have for what I had done already.

"But everybody says that you have made two hundred thousand florins by it."

"That would not be so bad; half a million of francs would be a fair foundation on which to build a fortune; but I can assure your excellence that there is not a word of truth in the report. I defy

anyone to prove it; and till some substantial proof is offered, I think I can lay claim to brokerage."

"True, true. Go to the comptroller-general and state your views to him."

M. de Boulogne stopped the occupation on which he was engaged to give me a most friendly greeting, but when I said that he owed me a hundred thousand florins he smiled sardonically.

"I happen to know," he said, "that you have bills of exchange to the amount of a hundred thousand crowns payable to yourself."

"Certainly, but that money has no connection with my mission, as I can prove to you by referring you to M. d'Afri. I have in my head an infallible project for increasing the revenue by twenty millions, in a manner which will cause no irritation."

"You don't say so! Communicate your plan, and I promise to get you a pension of a hundred thousand francs, and letters of nobility as well, if you like to become a Frenchman."

"I will think it over."

On leaving M. de Boulogne I went to the Palace, where a ballet was going on before the Marquise de Pompadour.

She bowed to me as soon as she saw me, and on my approaching her she told me that I was an able financier, and that the "gentlemen below" could not appreciate my merits. She had not forgotten what I had said to her eight years before in the theatre

at Fontainebleau. I replied that all good gifts were from above, whither, with her help, I hoped to attain.

On my return to Paris I went to the "Hotel Bourbon" to inform my patron of the result of my journey. His advice to me was to continue to serve the Government well, as its good fortune would come to be mine. On my telling him of my meeting with the X—— C—— V——s, he said that M. de la Popelinière was going to marry the elder daughter.

When I got to my house my son was nowhere to be found. My landlady told me that a great lady had come to call on *my lord,* and that she had taken him away with her. Guessing that this was Madame d'Urfé, I went to bed without troubling myself any further. Early next morning my clerk brought me a letter. It came from the old attorney, uncle to Gaetan's wife, whom I had helped to escape from the jealous fury of her brutal husband. The attorney begged me to come and speak to him at the courts, or to make an appointment at some place where he could see me. I went to the courts and found him there.

"My niece," he began, "found herself obliged to go into a convent; and from this vantage ground she is pleading against her husband, with the aid of a barrister, who will be responsible for the costs. However, to win our case, we require the evidence of

yourself, Count Tiretta, and other servants who witnessed the scene at the inn."

I did all I could, and four months afterwards Gaetan simplified matters by a fraudulent bankruptcy, which obliged him to leave France: in due time and place, I shall have something more to say about him. As for his wife, who was young and pretty, she paid her counsel in love's money, and was very happy with him, and may be happy still for all I know, but I have entirely lost sight of her.

After my interview with the old attorney I went to Madame—— to see Tiretta, who was out. Madame was still in love with him, and he continued to make a virtue of necessity. I left my address, and went to the "Hotel de Bretagne" to pay my first call on Madame X—— C—— V——. The lady, though she was not over fond of me, received me with great politeness. I possibly cut a better figure in her eyes when rich, and at Paris, then when we were in Venice. We all know that diamonds have the strange power of fascination, and that they form an excellent substitute for virtue!

Madame X—— C—— V—— had with her an old Greek named Zandiri, brother to M. de Bragadin's major-domo, who was just dead. I uttered some expressions of sympathy, and the boor did not take the trouble to answer me, but I was avenged for his foolish stiffness by the enthusiasm with which I was welcomed by everyone else. The eldest girl, her

sisters, and the two sons, almost overwhelmed me with friendliness. The eldest son was only fourteen, and was a young fellow of charming manners, but evidently extremely independent, and sighed for the time when he would be able to devote himself to a career of profligacy for which he was well fitted. Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— was both beautiful and charming in her manner, and had received an excellent education of which, however, she made no parade. One could not stay in her presence without loving her, but she was no flirt, and I soon saw that she held out no vain hopes to those who had the misfortune not to please her. Without being rude she knew how to be cold, and it was all the worse for those whom her coldness did not shew that their quest was useless.

The first hour I passed in her company chained me a captive to her triumphant car. I told her as much, and she replied that she was glad to have such a captive. She took the place in my heart where Esther had reigned a week before, but I freely confess that Esther yielded only because she was away. As to my attachment to Sylvia's daughter, it was of such a nature as not to hinder me falling in love with any other woman who chanced to take my fancy. In the libertine's heart love cannot exist without substantial food, and women who have had some experience of the world are well aware of this

fact. The youthful Baletti was a beginner, and so knew nothing of these things.

M. Farsetti, a Venetian of noble birth, a knight of Malta, a great student of the occult sciences, and a good Latin versifier, came in at one o'clock. Dinner was just ready and Madame X—— C—— V—— begged him to stay. She asked me also to dine with them, but wishing to dine with Madame d'Urfé I refused the invitation for the nonce.

M. Farsetti, who had known me very well at Venice, only noticed me by a side-glance, and without shewing any vexation I paid him back in the same coin. He smiled at Mdlle. X—— C—— V——'s praise of my courage. She noticed his expression, and as if to punish him for it went on to say that I had now the admiration of every Venetian, and that the French were anxious to have the honour of calling me a fellow-citizen. M. Farsetti asked me if my post at the lottery paid well. I replied, coolly,—

"Oh, yes, well enough for me to pay my clerks' salaries."

He understood the drift of my reply, and Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— smiled.

I found my supposed son with Madame d'Urfé, or rather in that amiable visionary's arms. She hastened to apologize for carrying him off, and I turned it off with a jest, having no other course to take.

"I made him sleep with me," she said, "but I shall be obliged to deprive myself of this privilege for the future, unless he promises to be more discreet."

I thought the idea a grand one, and the little fellow, in spite of his blushes, begged her to say how he had offended.

"We shall have the Comte de St. Germain," said Madame d'Urfé, "to dinner. I know he amuses you, and I like you to enjoy yourself in my house."

"For that, madam, your presence is all I need; nevertheless, I thank you for considering me."

In due course St. Germain arrived, and in his usual manner sat himself down, not to eat but to talk. With a face of imperturbable gravity he told the most incredible stories, which one had to pretend to believe, as he was always either the hero of the tale or an eye-witness of the event. All the same, I could not help bursting into laughter when he told us of something that happened as he was dining with the Fathers of the Council of Trent.

Madame d'Urfé wore on her neck a large magnet. She said that it would one day happen that this magnet would attract the lightning, and that she would consequently soar into the sun. I longed to tell her that when she got there she could be no higher up than on the earth, but I restrained myself; and the great charlatan hastened to say that there could be no doubt about it, and that he, and

he only, could increase the force of the magnet a thousand times. I said, dryly, that I would wager twenty thousand crowns he would not so much as double its force, but Madame d'Urfé would not let us bet, and after dinner she told me in private that I should have lost, as St. Germain was a magician. Of course I agreed with her.

A few days later, the magician set out for Chambord, where the king had given him a suite of rooms and a hundred thousand francs, that he might be at liberty to work on the dyes which were to assure the superiority of French materials over those of any other country. St. Germain had got over the king by arranging a laboratory where he occasionally tried to amuse himself, though he knew little about chemistry, but the king was the victim of an almost universal weariness. To enjoy a harem recruited from amongst the most ravishing beauties, and often from the ranks of neophytes, with whom pleasure had its difficulties, one would have needed to be a god, and Louis XV. was only a man after all.

It was the famous marquise who had introduced the adept to the king in the hope of his distracting the monarch's weariness, by giving him a taste for chemistry. Indeed Madame de Pompadour was under the impression that St. Germain had given her the water of perpetual youth, and therefore felt obliged to make the chemist a good return. This wondrous water, taken according to the charlatan's

directions, could not indeed make old age retire and give way to youth, but according to the marquise it would preserve one *in statu quo for* several centuries.

As a matter of fact, the water, or the giver of it, had worked wonders, if not on her body, at least on her mind; she assured the king that she was not getting older. The king was as much deluded by this grand impostor as she was, for one day he shewed the Duc des Deux-Ponts a diamond of the first water, weighing twelve carats, which he fancied he had made himself. "I melted down," said Louis XV., "small diamonds weighing twenty-four carats, and obtained this one large one weighing twelve." Thus it came to pass that the infatuated monarch gave the impostor the suite formerly occupied by Marshal Saxe. The Duc des Deux-Ponts told me this story with his own lips, one evening, when I was supping with him and a Swede, the Comte de Levenhoop, at Metz.

Before I left Madame d'Urfé, I told her that the lad might be he who should make her to be born again, but that she would spoil all if she did not wait for him to attain the age of puberty. After what she had said about his misbehaviour, the reader will guess what made me say this. She sent him to board with Viar, gave him masters on everything, and disguised him under the name of the Comte d'Aranda, although he was born at Bayreuth, and though his mother never had anything to do with a

Spaniard of that name. It was three or four months before I went to see him, as I was afraid of being insulted on account of the name which the visionary Madame d'Urfé had given him.

One day Tiretta came to see me in a fine coach. He told me that his elderly mistress wanted to become his wife, but that he would not hear of it, though she offered to endow him with all her worldly goods. I told him that if he gave in he might pay his debts, return to Trevisa, and live pleasantly there; but his destiny would not allow him to take my advice.

I had resolved on taking a country house, and fixed on one called "Little Poland," which pleased me better than all the others I had seen. It was well furnished, and was a hundred paces distant from the Madeleine Gate. It was situated on slightly elevated ground near the royal park, behind the Duc de Grammont's garden, and its owner had given it the name of "Pleasant Warsaw." It had two gardens, one of which was on a level with the first floor, three reception rooms, large stables, coach houses, baths, a good cellar, and a splendid kitchen. The master was called "The Butter King," and always wrote himself down so; the name had been given to him by Louis XV. on the monarch's stopping at the house and liking the butter. The "Butter King" let me his house for a hundred louis per annum, and he gave me an excellent cook called "The Pearl," a true

blue-ribbon of the order of cooks, and to her he gave charge of all his furniture and the plate I should want for a dinner of six persons, engaging to get me as much plate as I wanted at the hire of a sou an ounce. He also promised to let me have what wine I wanted, and said all he had was of the best, and, moreover, cheaper than I could get it at Paris, as he had no gate-money to pay on it.

Matters having been arranged on these terms, in the course of a week I got a good coachman, two fine carriages, five horses, a groom, and two footmen. Madame d'Urfé, who was my first guest, was delighted with my new abode, and as she imagined that I had done it all for her, I left her in that flattering opinion. I never could believe in the morality of snatching from poor mortal man the delusions which make them happy. I also let her retain the notion that young d'Aranda, the count of her own making, was a scion of the nobility, that he was born for a mysterious operation unknown to the rest of mankind, that I was only his caretaker (here I spoke the truth), and that he must die and yet not cease to live. All these whimsical ideas were the products of her brain, which was only occupied with the impossible, and I thought the best thing I could do was to agree with everything. If I had tried to undeceive her, she would have accused me of want of trust in her, for she was convinced that all her knowledge was revealed to her by her genius, who spoke to her

only by night. After she had dined with me I took her back to her house, full of happiness.

Camille sent me a lottery ticket, which she had invested in at my office, and which proved to be a winning one, I think, for a thousand crowns or thereabouts. She asked me to come and sup with her, and bring the money with me. I accepted her invitation, and found her surrounded by all the girls she knew and their lovers. After supper I was asked to go to the opera with them, but we had scarcely got there when I lost my party in the crowd. I had no mask on, and I soon found myself attacked by a black domino, whom I knew to be a woman, and as she told me a hundred truths about myself in a falsetto voice, I was interested, and determined on finding out who she was. At last I succeeded in persuading her to come with me into a box, and as soon as we were in and I had taken off her mask I was astonished to find she was Mdlle. X—— C—— V——.

"I have come to the ball," said she, "with one of my sisters, my elder brother, and M. Farsetti. I left them to go into a box and change my domino."

"They must feel very uneasy."

"I dare say they do, but I am not going to take pity on them till the end of the ball."

Finding myself alone with her, and certain of having her in my company for the rest of the night, I began to talk of our old love-making; and I took care to say that I was more in love with her than

ever. She listened to me kindly, did not oppose my embraces, and by the few obstacles she placed in my way I judged that the happy moment was not far off. Nevertheless I felt that I must practice restraint that evening, and she let me see that she was obliged to me.

"I heard at Versailles, my dear mademoiselle, that you are going to marry M. de la Popelinière."

"So they say. My mother wishes me to do so, and the old financier fancies he has got me in his talons already; but he makes a mistake, as I will never consent to such a thing."

"He is old, but he is very rich."

"He is very rich and very generous, for he promises me a dowry of a million if I become a widow without children; and if I had a son he would leave me all his property."

"You wouldn't have much difficulty in complying with the second alternative."

"I shall never have anything to do with his money, for I should never make my life miserable by a marriage with a man whom I do not love, while I do love another."

"Another! Who is the fortunate mortal to whom you have given your heart's treasure?"

"I do not know if my loved one is fortunate. My lover is a Venetian, and my mother knows of it; but she says that I should not be happy, that he is not worthy of me."

"Your mother is a strange woman, always crossing your affections."

"I cannot be angry with her. She may possibly be wrong, but she certainly loves me. She would rather that I should marry M. Farsetti, who would be very glad to have me, but I detest him."

"Has he made a declaration in terms?"

"He has, and all the marks of contempt I have given him seem to have no effect."

"He clings hard to hope; but the truth is you have fascinated him."

"Possibly, but I do not think him susceptible of any tender or generous feeling. He is a visionary; surly, jealous, and envious in his disposition. When he heard me expressing myself about you in the manner you deserve, he had the impudence to say to my mother before my face that she ought not to receive you."

"He deserves that I should give him a lesson in manners, but there are other ways in which he may be punished. I shall be delighted to serve you in any way I can."

"Alas! if I could only count on your friendship I should be happy."

The sigh with which she uttered these words sent fire through my veins, and I told her that I was her devoted slave; that I had fifty thousand crowns which were at her service, and that I would risk my life to win her favours. She replied that she was

truly grateful to me, and as she threw her arms about my neck our lips met, but I saw that she was weeping, so I took care that the fire which her kisses raised should be kept within bounds. She begged me to come and see her often, promising that as often as she could manage it we should be alone. I could ask no more, and after I had promised to come and dine with them on the morrow, we parted.

I passed an hour in walking behind her, enjoying my new position of intimate friend, and I then returned to my Little Poland. It was a short distance, for though I lived in the country I could get to any part of Paris in a quarter of an hour. I had a clever coachman, and capital horses not used to being spared. I got them from the royal stables, and as soon as I lost one I got another from the same place, having to pay two hundred francs. This happened to me several times, for, to my mind, going fast is one of the greatest pleasures which Paris offers.

Having accepted an invitation to dinner at the X—— C—— V——'s, I did not give myself much time for sleep, and I went out on foot with a cloak on. The snow was falling in large flakes, and when I got to madame's I was as white as a sheet from head to foot. She gave me a hearty welcome, laughing, and saying that her daughter had been telling her how she had puzzled me, and that she was delighted to see me come to dinner without ceremony.

"But," added she, "it's Friday to-day, and you will have to fast, though, after all, the fish is very good. Dinner is not ready yet. You had better go and see my daughter, who is still a-bed."

As may be imagined, this invitation had not to be repeated, for a pretty woman looks better in bed than anywhere else. I found Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— sitting up in bed writing, but she stopped as soon as she saw me.

"How is this, sweet lie-a-bed, not up yet?"

"Yes, I am staying in bed partly because I feel lazy, and partly because I am freer here."

"I was afraid you were not quite well."

"Nor am I. However, we will say no more about that now. I am just going to take some soup, as those who foolishly establish the institution of fasting were not polite enough to ask my opinion on the subject. It does not agree with my health, and I don't like it, so I am not going to get up even to sit at table, though I shall thus deprive myself of your society."

I naturally told her that in her absence dinner would have no savour; and I spoke the truth.

As the presence of her sister did not disturb us, she took out of her pocket-book an epistle in verse which I had addressed to her when her mother had forbidden me the house. "This fatal letter," said she, "which you called 'The Phœnix,' has shaped my life and may prove the cause of my death."

I had called it the Phœnix because, after bewailing my unhappy lot, I proceeded to predict how she would afterwards give her heart to a mortal whose qualities would make him deserve the name of Phœnix. A hundred lines were taken up in the description of these imaginary mental and moral characteristics, and certainly the being who should have them all would be right worthy of worship, for he would be rather a god than a man.

"Alas!" said Mdlle. X—— C—— V——, "I fell in love with this imaginary being, and feeling certain that such an one must exist I set myself to look for him. After six months I thought I had found him. I gave him my heart, I received his, we loved each other fondly. But for the last four months we have been separated, and during the whole time I have only had one letter from him. Yet I must not blame him, for I know he cannot help it. Such is my sorry fate: I can neither hear from him nor write to him."

This story was a confirmation of a theory of mine—namely, that the most important events in our lives proceed often from the most trifling causes. My epistle was nothing better than a number of lines of poetry more or less well written, and the being I had delineated was certainly not to be found, as he surpassed by far all human perfections, but a woman's heart travels so quickly and so far! Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— took the thing literally,

and fell in love with a chimera of goodness, and then was fain to turn this into a real lover, not thinking of the vast difference between the ideal and the real. For all that, when she thought that she had found the original of my fancy portrait, she had no difficulty in endowing him with all the good qualities I had pictured. Of course Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— would have fallen in love if I had never written her a letter in verse, but she would have done so in a different manner, and probably with different results.

As soon as dinner was served we were summoned to do justice to the choice fish which M. de la Popelinière had provided. Madame X—— C—— V——, a narrow-minded Greek, was naturally bigoted and superstitious. In the mind of a silly woman the idea of an alliance between the most opposite of beings, God and the Devil, seems quite natural. A priest had told her that, since she had converted her husband, her salvation was secure, for the Scriptures solemnly promised a *soul for a soul* to everyone who would lead a heretic or a heathen within the fold of the church. And as Madame X—— C—— V—— had converted her husband, she felt no anxiety about the life of the world to come, as she had done all that was necessary. However, she ate fish on the days appointed; the reason being that she preferred it to flesh.

Dinner over, I returned to the lady's bedside,

and there stayed till nearly nine o'clock, keeping my passions well under control all the time. I was foppish enough to think that her feelings were as lively as mine, and I did not care to shew myself less self-restrained than she, though I knew then, as I know now, that this was a false line of argument. It is the same with opportunity as with fortune; one must seize them when they come to us, or else they go by, often to return no more.

Not seeing Farsetti at the table, I suspected there had been a quarrel, and I asked my sweetheart about it; but she told me I was mistaken in supposing they had quarrelled with him, and that the reason of his absence was that he would never leave his house on a Friday. The deluded man had had his horoscope drawn, and learning by it that he would be assassinated on a Friday he resolved always to shut himself up on that day. He was laughed at, but persisted in the same course till he died four years ago at the age of seventy. He thought to prove by the success of his precautions that a man's destiny depends on his discretion, and on the precautions he takes to avoid the misfortunes of which he has had warning. This line of argument holds good in all cases except when the misfortunes are predicted in a horoscope; for either the ills predicted are avoidable, in which case the horoscope is a useless piece of folly, or else the horoscope is the interpreter of destiny, in which case all the precautions in the world are of

no avail. The Chevalier Farsetti was therefore a fool to imagine he had proved anything at all. He would have proved a good deal for many people if he had gone out on a Friday, and had chanced to have been assassinated. Picus de la Mirandola, who believed in astrology, says, "I have no doubt truly, *Astra influunt, non cogunt.*" But would it have been a real proof of the truth of astrology, if Farsetti had been assassinated on a Friday? In my opinion, certainly not.

The Comte d'Eigreville had introduced me to his sister, the Comtesse du Rumain, who had been wanting to make my acquaintance ever since she had heard of my oracle. It was not long before I made friends with her husband and her two daughters, the elder of whom, nicknamed "Cotenfau," married M. de Polignac later on. Madame du Rumain was handsome rather than pretty, but she won the love of all by her kindness, her frank courtesy, and her eagerness to be of service to her friends. She had a magnificent figure, and would have awed the whole bench of judges if she had pleaded before them.

At her house I got to know Mesdames de Valbelle and de Rancerolles, the Princess de Chimai, and many others who were then in the best society of Paris. Although Madame du Rumain was not a proficient in the occult sciences, she had nevertheless consulted my oracle more frequently than Madame d'Urfé. She was of the utmost service to me in con-

nection with an unhappy circumstance of which I shall speak presently.

The day after my long conversation with Mdlle. X—— C—— V——, my servant told me that there was a young man waiting who wanted to give me a letter with his own hands. I had him in, and on my asking him from whom the letter came, he replied that I should find all particulars in the letter, and that he had orders to wait for an answer. The epistle ran as follows:

"I am writing this at two o'clock in the morning. I am weary and in need of rest, but a burden on my soul deprives me of sleep. The secret I am about to tell you will no longer be so grievous when I have confided in you; I shall feel eased by placing it in your breast. I am with child, and my situation drives me to despair. I was obliged to write to you because I felt I could not say it. Give me a word in reply."

My feelings on reading the above may be guessed. I was petrified with astonishment and could only write, "I will be with you at eleven o'clock."

No one should say that he has passed through great misfortunes unless they have proved too great for his mind to bear. The confidence of Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— shewed me that she was in need of support. I congratulated myself on having the preference, and I vowed to do my best for her

did it cost me my life. These were the thoughts of a lover, but for all that I could not conceal from myself the imprudence of the step she had taken. In such cases as these there is always the choice between speaking or writing, and the only feeling which can give the preference to writing is false shame, at bottom mere cowardice. If I had not been in love with her, I should have found it easier to have refused my aid in writing than if she had spoken to me, but I loved her to distraction.

"Yes," said I to myself, "she can count on me. Her mishap makes her all the dearer to me."

And below this there was another voice, a voice which whispered to me that if I succeeded in saving her my reward was sure. I am well aware that more than one grave moralist will fling stones at me for this avowal, but my answer is that such men cannot be in love as I was.

I was punctual to my appointment, and found the fair unfortunate at the door of the hotel.

"You are going out, are you? Where are you going?"

"I am going to mass at the Church of the Augustinians."

"Is this a saint's day?"

"No; but my mother makes me go every day."

"I will come with you."

"Yes do, give me your arm; we will go into the cloisters and talk there."

Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— was accompanied by her maid, but she knew better than to be in the way, so we left her in the cloisters. As soon as we were alone she said to me,—

"Have you read my letter?"

"Yes, of course; here it is, burn it yourself."

"No, keep it, and do so with your own hands."

"I see you trust in me, and I assure you I will not abuse your trust."

"I am sure you will not. I am four months with child; I can doubt it no longer, and the thought maddens me!"

"Comfort yourself, we will find some way to get over it."

"Yes; I leave all to you. You must procure an abortion."

"Never, dearest! that is a crime!"

"Alas! I know that well; but it is not a greater crime than suicide, and there lies my choice: either to destroy the wretched witness of my shame, or to poison myself. For the latter alternative I have everything ready. You are my only friend, and it is for you to decide which it shall be. Speak to me! Are you angry that I have not gone to the Chevalier Farsetti before you?"

She saw my astonishment, and stopped short, and tried to wipe away the tears which escaped from her eyes. My heart bled for her.

"Laying the question of crime on one side,"

said I, "abortion is out of our power. If the means employed are not violent they are uncertain, and if they are violent they are dangerous to the mother. I will never risk becoming your executioner; but reckon on me, I will not forsake you. Your honour is as dear to me as your life. Be calm, and henceforth think that the peril is mine, not yours. Make up your mind that I shall find some way of escape, and that there will be no need to cut short that life, to preserve which I would gladly die. And allow me to say that when I read your note I felt glad, I could not help it, that at such an emergency you chose me before all others to be your helper. You will find that your trust was not given in vain, for no one loves you as well as I, and no one is so fain to help you. Later you shall begin to take the remedies I will get for you, but I warn you to be on your guard, for this is a serious matter—one of life and death. Possibly you have already told somebody about it—your maid or one of your sisters?"

"I have not hold anybody but you, not even the author of my shame. I tremble when I think what my mother would do and say if she found out my situation. I am afraid she will draw her conclusions from my shape."

"So far there is nothing to be observed in that direction, the beauty of the outline still remains intact."

"But every day increases its size, and for that

reason we must be quick in what we do. You must find a surgeon who does not know my name and take me to him to be bled."

"I will not run the risk, it might lead to the discovery of the whole affair. I will bleed you myself; it is a simple operation."

"How grateful I am to you! I feel as if you had already brought me from death to life. What I should like you to do would be to take me to a midwife's. We can easily go without attracting any notice at the first ball at the opera."

"Yes, sweetheart, but that step is not necessary, and it might lead to our betrayal."

"No, no, in this great town there are midwives in every quarter, and we should never be known; we might keep our masks on all the time. Do me this kindness. A midwife's opinion is certainly worth having."

I could not refuse her request, but I made her agree to wait till the last ball, as the crowd was always greater, and we had a better chance of going out free from observation. I promised to be there in a black domino with a white mask in the Venetian fashion, and a rose painted beside the left eye. As soon as she saw me go out she was to follow me into a carriage. All this was carried out, but more of it anon.

I returned with her, and dined with them without taking any notice of Farsetti, who was also at

the table, and had seen me come back from mass with her. We did not speak a word to one another; he did not like me and I despised him.

I must here relate a grievous mistake of which I was guilty, and which I have not yet forgiven myself.

I had promised to take Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— to a midwife, but I certainly ought to have taken her to a respectable woman's, for all we wanted to know was how a pregnant woman should regulate her diet and manner of living. But my evil genius took me by the Rue St. Louis, and there I saw the Montigni entering her house with a pretty girl whom I did not know, and so out of curiosity I went in after them. After amusing myself there, with Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— running in my head all the time, I asked the woman to give me the address of a midwife, as I wanted to consult one. She told me of a house in the Marais, where according to her dwelt the pearl of midwives, and began telling me some stories of her exploits, which all went to prove that the woman was an infamous character. I took her address, however, and as I should have to go there by night, I went the next day to see where the house was.

Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— began to take the remedies which I brought her, which ought to have weakened and destroyed the result of love, but as she did not experience any benefit, she was impatient

to consult a midwife. On the night of the last ball she recognized me as we had agreed, and followed me out into the coach she saw me enter, and in less than a quarter of an hour we reached the house of shame.

A woman of about fifty received us with great politeness, and asked what she could do.

Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— told her that she believed herself pregnant, and that she desired some means of concealing her misfortune. The wretch answered with a smile that she might as well tell her plainly that it would be easy to procure abortion. "I will do your business," said she, "for fifty louis, half to be paid in advance on account of drugs, and the rest when it's all over. I will trust in your honesty, and you will have to trust in mine. Give me the twenty-five louis down, and come or send to-morrow for the drugs, and instructions for using them."

So saying she turned up her clothes without any ceremony, and as I, at Mdlle. X—— C—— V——'s request, looked away, she felt her and pronounced, as she let down her dress, that she was not beyond the fourth month.

"If my drugs," said she, "contrary to my expectation, do not do any good, we will try some other ways, and, in any case, if I do not succeed in obliging you I will return you your money."

"I don't doubt it for a moment," said I, "but

would you tell me what are those other ways!"

"I should tell the lady how to destroy the fœtus."

I might have told her that to kill the child meant giving a mortal wound to the mother, but I did not feel inclined to enter into a argument with this vile creature.

"If madame decides on taking your advice," said I, "I will bring you the money for drugs to-morrow."

I gave her two louis and left. Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— told me that she had no doubt of the infamy of this woman, as she was sure it was impossible to destroy the offspring without the risk of killing the mother also. "My only trust," said she, "is in you." I encouraged her in this idea, dissuading her from any criminal attempts, and assured her over and over again that she should not find her trust in me misplaced. All at once she complained of feeling cold, and asked if we had not time to warm ourselves in Little Poland, saying that she longed to see my pretty house. I was surprised and delighted with the idea. The night was too dark for her to see the exterior charms of my abode, she would have to satisfy herself with the inside, and leave the rest to her imagination. I thought my hour had come. I made the coach stop and we got down and walked some way, and then took another at the corner of the Rue de la Ferannerie. I promised the coachman six francs beyond his fare,

and in a quarter of an hour he put us down at my door.

I rang with the touch of the master, the Pearl opened the door, and told me that there was nobody within, as I very well knew, but it was her habit to do so.

"Quick!" said I, "light us a fire, and bring some glasses and a bottle of champagne."

"Would you like an omelette?"

"Very well."

"Oh, I should like an omelette so much!" said Mdlle. X—— C—— V——. She was ravishing, and her laughing air seemed to promise me a moment of bliss. I sat down before the blazing fire and made her sit on my knee, covering her with kisses which she gave me back as lovingly. I had almost won what I wanted when she asked me in a sweet voice to stop. I obeyed, thinking it would please her, feeling sure that she only delayed my victory to make it more complete, and that she would surrender after the champagne. I saw love, kindness, trust, and gratitude shining in her face, and I should have been sorry for her to think that I claimed her as a mere reward. No, I wanted her love, and nothing but her love.

At last we got to our last glass of champagne, we rose from the table, and sentimentally but with gentle force I laid her on a couch and held her amorously in my arms. But instead of giving herself up to my embraces she resisted them, at first by

those prayers which usually make lovers more enterprising, then by serious remonstrances, and at last by force. This was too much, the mere idea of using violence has always shocked me, and I am still of opinion that the only pleasure in the amorous embrace springs from perfect union and agreement. I pleaded my cause in every way, I painted myself as the lover flattered, deceived, despised! At last I told her that I had had a cruel awakening, and I saw that the shaft went home. I fell on my knees and begged her to forgive me. "Alas!" said she, in a voice full of sadness, "I am no longer mistress of my heart, and have far greater cause for grief than you." The tears flowed fast down her cheeks, her head rested on my shoulder, and our lips met; but for all that the piece was over. The idea of renewing the attack never came into my head, and if it had I should have scornfully rejected it. After a long silence, of which we both stood in need, she to conquer her shame, and I to repress my anger, we put on our masks and returned to the opera. On our way she dared to tell me that she should be obliged to decline my friendship if she had to pay for it so dearly.

"The emotions of love," I replied, "should yield to those of honour, and your honour as well as mine require us to continue friends. What I would have done for love I will now do for devoted friendship, and for the future I will die rather than make another

attempt to gain those favours of which I thought you deemed me worthy."

We separated at the opera, and the vast crowd made me lose sight of her in an instant. Next day she told me that she had danced all night. She possibly hoped to find in that exercise the cure which no medicine seemed likely to give her.

I returned to my house in a bad humour, trying in vain to justify a refusal which seemed humiliating and almost incredible. My good sense shewed me, in spite of all sophisms, that I had been grievously insulted. I recollected the witty saying of Populia, who was never unfaithful to her husband except when she was with child,—*"Non tollo vectorem,"* said she, *"nisi navi plena."*

I felt certain that I was not loved, and the thought grieved me; and I considered that it would be unworthy of me to love one whom I could no longer hope to possess. I resolved to avenge myself by leaving her to her fate, feeling that I could not allow myself to be duped as I had been.

The night brought wisdom with it, and when I awoke in the morning my mind was calm and I was still in love. I determined to act generously by the unfortunate girl. Without my aid she would be ruined; my course, then, would be to continue my services and to shew myself indifferent to her favours. The part was no easy one, but I played it right well, and at last my reward came of itself.

CHAPTER VII

I CONTINUE MY RELATIONS WITH MDLLE. X. C. V.—VAIN ATTEMPTS TO PROCURE ABORTION—THE AROPH—SHE FLIES FROM HOME AND TAKES REFUGE IN A CONVENT

The difficulties I encountered only served to increase my love for my charming Englishwoman. I went to see her every morning, and as my interest in her condition was genuine, she could have no suspicion that I was acting a part, or attribute my care of her to anything but the most delicate feelings. For her part she seemed well pleased in the alteration of my behaviour, though her satisfaction may very probably have been assumed. I understood women well enough to know that though she did not love me she was probably annoyed at seeing my new character sit upon me so easily.

One morning in the midst of an unimportant and disconnected conversation, she complimented me upon my strength of mind in subduing my passion, adding, with a smile, that my desire could not have pricked me very sharply, seeing that I had cured myself so well in the course of a week. I quietly

replied that I owed my cure not to the weakness of my passion but to my self-respect.

"I know my own character," I said, "and without undue presumption, I think I may say that I am worthy of a woman's love. Naturally, after your convincing me that you think differently, I feel humiliated and indignant. Do you know what effect such feelings have on the heart?"

"Alas!" said she, "I know too well. Their effect is to inspire one with contempt for her who gave rise to them."

"That is going too far, at least in my case. My indignation was merely succeeded by a renewed confidence in myself, and a determination to be revenged."

"To be revenged! In what way?"

"I wish to compel you to esteem me, by proving to you that I am lord of myself, and can pass by with indifference what I once so ardently desired. I do not know whether I have succeeded yet, but I may say that I can now contemplate your charms without desiring to possess them."

"You are making a mistake, for I never ceased to esteem you, and I esteemed you as much a week ago as I do to-day. Not for a moment did I think you capable of leaving me to my fate as a punishment for having refused to give way to your transports, and I am glad that I read your character rightly."

We went on to speak of the opiate I made her

take, and as she saw no change in her condition she wanted me to increase the dose—a request I took care not to grant, as I knew that more than half a drachm might kill her. I also forbade her to bleed herself again, as she might do herself a serious injury without gaining anything by it. Her maid, of whom she had been obliged to make a confidante, had had her bled by a student, her lover. I told Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— that if she wanted these people to keep her counsel she must be liberal with them, and she replied that she had no money. I offered her money and she accepted fifty louis, assuring me that she would repay me that sum which she needed for her brother Richard. I had not as much money about me, but I sent her the same day a packet of twelve hundred francs with a note in which I begged her to have recourse to me in all her necessities. Her brother got the money, and thought himself authorized to apply to me for aid in a much more important matter.

He was a young man and a profligate, and had got into a house of ill-fame, from which he came out in sorry plight. He complained bitterly that M. Farsetti had refused to lend him four louis, and he asked me to speak to his mother that she might pay for his cure. I consented, but when his mother heard what was the matter with him, she said it would be much better to leave him as he was, as this was the third time he had been in this condition,

and that to have him cured was a waste of money, as no sooner was he well than he began his dissipated life afresh. She was quite right, for I had him cured at my expense by an able surgeon, and he was in the same way a month after. This young man seemed intended by nature for shameful excesses, for at the age of fourteen he was an accomplished profligate.

His sister was now six months with child, and as her figure grew great so did her despair. She resolved not to leave her bed, and it grieved me to see her thus cast down. Thinking me perfectly cured of my passion for her, she treated me purely as a friend, making me touch her all over to convince me that she dare not shew herself any longer. I played in short the part of a midwife, but with what a struggle! I had to pretend to be calm and unconcerned when I was consumed with passion. She spoke of killing herself in a manner that made me shudder, as I saw that she had reflected on what she was saying. I was in a difficult position when fortune came to my assistance in a strange and amusing manner.

One day, as I was dining with Madame d'Urfé, I asked her if she knew of any way by which a girl, who had allowed her lover to go too far, might be protected from shame. "I know of an infallible method," she replied, "the aroph of Paracelsus to wit, and it is easy of application. Do you wish to

know more about it?" she added; and without waiting for me to answer she brought a manuscript, and put it in my hands. This powerful emmenagogue was a kind of unguent composed of several drugs, such as saffron, myrrh, etc., compounded with virgin honey. To obtain the necessary result one had to employ a cylindrical machine covered with extremely soft skin, thick enough to fill the opening of the vagina, and long enough to reach the opening of the reservoir or case containing the fœtus. The end of this apparatus was to be well anointed with aroph, and as it only acted at a moment of uterine excitement it was necessary to apply it with the same movement as that of coition. The dose had to be repeated five or six times a day for a whole week.

This nostrum, and the manner of administering it, struck me in so laughable a light that I could not keep my countenance. I laughed with all my heart, but for all that I spent the next two hours in reading the dreams of Paracelsus, in which Madame d'Urfé put more trust than in the truths of the Gospel; I afterwards referred to Boerhaave, who speaks of the aroph in more reasonable terms.

Seeing, as I have remarked, the charming Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— several hours a day without any kind of constraint, feeling in love with her all the time, and always restraining my feelings, it is no wonder if the hidden fire threatened at every moment to leap up from the ashes of its concealment.

Her image pursued me unceasingly, of her I always thought, and every day made it more evident that I should know rest no more till I succeeded in extinguishing my passion by obtaining possession of all her charms.

As I was thinking of her by myself I resolved to tell her of my discovery, hoping she would need my help in the introduction of the cylinder. I went to see her at ten o'clock, and found her, as usual, in bed; she was weeping because the opiate I gave her did not take effect. I thought the time a good one for introducing the aroph of Paracelsus, which I assured her was an infallible means of attaining the end she desired; but whilst I was singing the praises of this application the idea came into my head to say that, to be absolutely certain, it was necessary for the aroph to be mingled with semen which had not lost its natural heat.

"This mixture," said I, "moistening several times a day the opening of the womb, weakens it to such a degree that the fœtus is expelled by its own weight."

To these details I added lengthy arguments to persuade her of the efficacy of this cure, and then, seeing that she was absorbed in thought, I said that as her lover was away she would want a sure friend to live in the same house with her, and give her the dose according to the directions of Paracelsus.

All at once she burst into a peal of laughter, and asked me if I had been jesting all the time.

I thought the game was up. The remedy was an absurd one, on the face of it; and if her common sense told her as much it would also make her guess my motive. But what limits are there to the credulity of a woman in her condition?

"If you wish," said I, persuasively, "I will give you the manuscript where all that I have said is set down plainly. I will also shew you what Boerhaave thinks about it."

I saw that these words convinced her; they had acted on her as if by magic, and I went on while the iron was hot.

"The aroph," said I, "is the most powerful agent for bringing on menstruation."

"And that is incompatible with the state I am now in; so the aroph should procure me a secret deliverance. Do you know its composition?"

"Certainly; it is quite a simple preparation composed of certain ingredients which are well known to me, and which have to be made into a paste with butter or virgin honey. But this composition must touch the orifice of the uterus at a moment of extreme excitement."

"But in that case it seems to me that the person who gives the dose must be in love."

"Certainly, unless he is a mere animal requiring only physical incentives."

She was silent for some time, for though she was quick-witted enough, a woman's natural modesty and her own frankness, prevented her from guessing at my artifice. I, too, astonished at my success in making her believe this fable, remained silent.

At last, breaking the silence, she said, sadly,—

"The method seems to me an excellent one, but I do not think I ought to make use of it."

Then she asked me if the aroph took much time to make.

"Two hours at most," I answered, "if I succeed in procuring English saffron, which Paracelsus prefers to the Oriental saffron."

At that moment her mother and the Chevalier Farsetti came in, and after some talk of no consequence she asked me to stay to dinner. I was going to decline, when Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— said she would sit at table, on which I accepted; and we all left the room to give her time to dress. She was not long in dressing, and when she appeared her figure seemed to me quite nymph-like. I was astonished, and could scarcely believe my eyes ,and I was on the point of thinking that I had been imposed on, for I could not imagine how she could manage to conceal the fulness I had felt with my own hands.

M. Farsetti sat by her, and I by the mother. Mdlle. X—— C—— V——, whose head was full of

the aroph, asked her neighbour, who gave himself out for a great chemist, if he knew it.

"I fancy I know it better than anyone," answered Farsetti, in a self-satisfied manner.

"What is it good for?"

"That is too vague a question."

"What does the word mean?"

"It is an Arabic word, of which I do not know the meaning; but no doubt Paracelsus would tell us."

"The word," said I, "is neither Arabic nor Hebrew, nor, indeed, of any language at all. It is a contraction which conceals two other words."

"Can you tell us what they are?" said the chevalier.

"Certainly; *aro* comes from *aroma,* and *ph* is the initial of *philosophorum.*"

"Did you get that out of Paracelsus?" said Farsetti, evidently annoyed.

"No, sir; I saw it in Boerhaave."

"That's good," said he, sarcastically; "Boerhaave says nothing of the sort, but I like a man who quotes readily."

"Laugh, sir, if you like," said I, proudly, "but here is the test of what I say; accept the wager if you dare. I don't quote falsely, like persons who talk of words being Arabic."

So saying I flung a purse of gold on the table, but Farsetti, who was by no means sure of what he

was saying, answered disdainfully that he never betted.

However, Mdlle. X—— C—— V——, enjoying his confusion, told him that was the best way never to lose, and began to joke him on his Arabic derivation. But, for my part, I replaced my purse in my pocket, and on some trifling pretext went out and sent my servant to Madame d'Urfé's to get me Boerhaave.

On my return to the room I sat down again at table, and joined gaily in the conversation till the return of my messenger with the book. I opened it, and as I had been reading it the evening before I soon found the place I wanted, and giving it to him begged him to satisfy himself that I had quoted not readily but exactly. Instead of taking the book, he got up and went out without saying a word.

"He has gone away in a rage," said the mother; "and I would wager anything that he will not come back again."

"I wager he will," said the daughter, "he will honour us with his agreeable company before to-morrow's sun has set."

She was right. From that day Farsetti became my determined enemy, and let no opportunity slip of convincing me of his hatred.

After dinner we all went to Passy to be present at a concert given by M. de la Popelinière, who made us stay to supper. I found there Silvia and her

charming daughter, who pouted at me and not without cause, as I had neglected her. The famous adept, St. Germain, enlivened the table with his wild tirades so finely delivered. I have never seen a more intellectual or amusing charlatan than he.

Next day I shut myself up to answer a host of questions that Esther had sent me. I took care to answer all those bearing on business matters as obscurely as possible, not only for the credit of the oracle, but also for fear of misleading the father and making him lose money. The worthy man was the most honest of Dutch millionaires, but he might easily make a large hole in his fortune, if he did not absolutely ruin himself, by putting an implicit trust in my infallibility. As for Esther, I confess that she was now no more to me than a pleasant memory.

In spite of my pretence of indifference, my whole heart was given to Mdlle. X—— C—— V——, and I dreaded the moment when she would be no longer able to hide her condition from her family. I was sorry for having spoken about the aroph, as three days had gone by without her mentioning it, and I could not very well reopen the question myself. I was afraid that she suspected my motives, and that the esteem she professed for me had been replaced by a much less friendly sentiment. I felt that her scorn would be too much for me to bear. So humiliated was I that I could not visit her, and I doubt if I should have seen her again if she had

not intervened. She wrote me a note, in which she said I was her only friend, and that the only mark of friendship she wanted was that I should come and see her every day, if it were but for a moment. I hasted to take her my reply in my own person, and promised not to neglect her, assuring her that at all hazards she might rely on me. I flattered myself that she would mention the aroph, but she did not do so. I concluded that, after thinking it over, she had resolved to think no more about it.

"Would you like me," I said, "to invite your mother and the rest of you to dine with me?"

"I shall be delighted," she replied. "It will be a forbidden pleasure to me before long."

I gave them a dinner both sumptuous and delicate. I had spared no expense to have everything of the best. I had asked Silvia, her charming daughter, an Italian musician named Magali, with whom a sister of Mdlle. X—— C—— V——'s was taken, and the famous bass La Garde. Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— was in the highest spirits all the time. Sallies of wit, jests, good stories and enjoyment, were the soul of the banquet. We did not separate till midnight, and before leaving Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— found a moment to whisper to me to come and see her early next morning, as she wanted to speak to me on matters of importance.

It will be guessed that I accepted the invitation. I waited on her before eight o'clock. She was very

melancholy, and told me that she was in despair, that la Popelinière pressed on the marriage, and that her mother persecuted her.

"She tells me that I must sign the contract, and that the dressmaker will soon be coming to take my measure for my wedding dress. To that I cannot consent, for a dressmaker would certainly see my situation. I will die rather than confide in my mother, or marry before I am delivered."

"There is always time enough to talk about dying," said I, "when all other means have failed. I think you could easily get rid of la Popelinière, who is a man of honour. Tell him how you are situated, and he will act without compromising you, as his own interest is sufficiently involved to make him keep the secret."

"But should I be much better off then? And how about my mother?"

"Your mother? Oh! I will make her listen to reason."

"You know not what she is like. The honour of the family would oblige her to get me out of the way, but before that she would make me suffer torments to which death is preferable by far. But why have you said no more about the aroph? Is it not all a jest? It would be a very cruel one."

"On the contrary, I believe it to be infallible, though I have never been a witness of its effects; but what good is it for me to speak to you? You

can guess that a delicacy of feeling has made me keep silence. Confide in your lover, who is at Venice; write him a letter, and I will take care that it is given into his hands, in five or six days, by a sure messenger. If he is not well off I will give you whatever money may be needed for him to come without delay, and save your honour and life by giving you the aroph."

"This idea is a good one and the offer generous on your part, but it is not feasible, as you would see if you knew more about my circumstances. Do not think any more of my lover; but supposing I made up my mind to receive the aroph from another, tell me how it could be done. Even if my lover were in Paris, how could he spend an entire week with me, as he would have to? And how could he give me the dose five or six times a day for a week? You see yourself that this remedy is out of the question."

"So you would give yourself to another, if you thought that would save your honour?"

"Certainly, if I were sure that the thing would be kept secret. But where shall I find such a person? Do you think he would be easy to find, or that I can go and look for him?"

I did not know what to make of this speech; for she knew I loved her, and I did not see why she should put herself to the trouble of going far when what she wanted was to her hand. I was inclined to think that she wanted me to ask her to make choice

of myself as the administrator of the remedy, either to spare her modesty, or to have the merit of yielding to my love and thus obliging me to be grateful; but I might be wrong, and I did not care to expose myself to the humiliation of a refusal. On the other hand I could hardly think she wanted to insult me. Not knowing what to say or which way to turn, and wanting to draw an explanation from her, I sighed profoundly, took up my hat, and made as if I were going, exlaiming, "Cruel girl, my lot is more wretched than yours."

She raised herself on the bed and begged me with tears in her eyes to remain, and asked me how I could call myself more wretched than her. Pretending to be annoyed ,and yet full of love for her, I told her that the contempt in which she held me had affected me deeply, since in her necessity she preferred the offices of one who was unknown to her rather than make use of me.

"You are cruel and unjust," she said, weeping. "I see, for my part, that you love me no longer since you wish to take advantage of my cruel necessity to gain a triumph over me. This is an act of revenge not worthy of a man of feeling."

Her tears softened me, and I fell on my knees before her.

"Since you know, dearest, that I worship you, how can you think me capable of revenging myself on you? Do you think that I can bear to hear you

say that since your lover cannot help you you do not know where to look for help?"

"But after refusing you my favours, could I ask this office of you with any decency? Have I not good reason to be afraid that as I refused to take pity on your love so you would refuse to take pity on my necessity?"

"Do you think that a passionate lover ceases to love on account of a refusal which may be dictated by virtue? Let me tell you all I think. I confess I once thought you did not love me, but now I am sure of the contrary; and that your heart would have led you to satisfy my love, even if you had not been thus situated. I may add that you no doubt feel vexed at my having any doubts of your love."

"You have interpreted my feelings admirably. But how we are to be together with the necessary freedom from observation remains to be seen."

"Do not be afraid. Now I am sure of your consent, it will not be long before I contrive some plan. In the meanwhile I will go and make the aroph."

I had resolved that if ever I succeeded in persuading Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— to make use of my specific I would use nothing but honey, so the composition of the aroph would not be a very complicated process. But if one point was then plain and simple, another remained to be solved, and its solution gave me some difficulty. I should have to

pass several nights in continual toils. I feared I had promised more than I could perform, and I should not be able to make any abatement without hazarding, not the success of the aroph, but the bliss I had taken such pains to win. Again, as her younger sister slept in the same room with her and close to her, the operation could not be performed there. At last chance—a divinity which often helps lovers—came to my aid.

I was obliged to climb up to the fourth floor and met the scullion on my way, who guessed where I was going, and begged me not to go any farther as the place was taken.

"But," said I, "you have just come out of it."

"Yes, but I only went in and came out again."

"Then I will wait till the coast is clear."

"For goodness' sake, sir, do not wait!"

"Ah, you rascal! I see what is going on. Well I will say nothing about it, but I must see her."

"She won't come out, for she heard your steps and shut herself in."

"She knows me, does she?"

"Yes, and you know her."

"All right, get along with you! I won't say anything about it."

He went down, and the idea immediately struck me that the adventure might be useful to me. I went up to the top, and through a chink I saw Madelaine, Mdlle. X—— C—— V——'s maid. I reas-

sured her, and promised to keep the secret, whereon she opened the door, and after I had given her a louis, fled in some confusion. Soon after, I came down, and the scullion who was waiting for me on the landing begged me to make Madelaine give him half the louis.

"I will give you one all to yourself," said I, "if you will tell me the story"—an offer which pleased the rogue well enough. He told me the tale of his loves, and said he always spent the night with her in the garret, but that for three days they had been deprived of their pleasures, as madam had locked the door and taken away the key. I made him shew me the place, and looking through the key-hole I saw that there was plenty of room for a mattress. I gave the scullion a louis, and went away to ripen my plans.

It seemed to me that there was no reason why the mistress should not sleep in the garret as well as the maid. I got a picklock and several skeleton keys, I put in a tin box several doses of the aroph—that is, some honey mixed with pounded stag's horn to make it thick enough, and the next morning I went to the "Hotel de Bretagne," and immediately tried my picklock. I could have done without it, as the first skeleton key I tried opened the wornout lock.

Proud of my idea, I went down to see Mdlle.

X—— C—— V——, and in a few words told her the plan.

"But," said she, "I should have to go through Madelaine's room to get to the garret."

"In that case, dearest, we must win the girl over."

"Tell her my secret?"

"Just so."

"Oh, I couldn't!"

"I will see to it; the golden key opens all doors."

The girl consented to all I asked her, but the scullion troubled me, for if he found us out he might be dangerous. I thought, however, that I might trust to Madelaine, who was a girl of wit, to look after him.

Before going I told the girl that I wanted to discuss some important matters with her, and I told her to meet me in the cloisters of the Augustinian Church. She came at the appointed time and I explained to her the whole plan in all its details. She soon understood me, and after telling me that she would take care to put her own bed in the new kind of boudoir, she added that, to be quite safe, we must make sure of the scullion.

"He is a sharp lad," said Madelaine, "and I think I can answer for him. However, you may leave that to me."

I gave her the key and six louis, bidding her in-

form her mistress of what we had agreed upon, and get the garret ready to receive us. She went away quite merry. A maid who is in love is never so happy as when she can make her mistress protect her intrigues.

Next morning the scullion called on me at my house. The first thing I told him was to take care not to betray himself to my servants, and never to come and see me except in a case of necessity. He promised discretion, and assured me of his devotion to my service. He gave me the key of the garret and told me that he had got another. I admired his forethought, and gave him a present of six louis, which had more effect on him than the finest words.

Next morning I only saw Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— for a moment to warn her that I should be at the appointed place at ten that evening. I went there early without being seen by anybody. I was in a cloak, and carried in my pocket the aroph, flint and steel, and a candle. I found a good bed, pillows, and a thick coverlet—a very useful provision, as the nights were cold, and we should require some sleep in the intervals of the operation.

At eleven a slight noise made my heart begin to beat—always a good sign. I went out, and found my mistress by feeling for her, and reassured her by a tender kiss. I brought her in, barricaded the door, and took care to cover up the keyhole to baffle

the curious, and, if the worse happened, to avoid a surprise.

"On my lighting the candle she seemed uneasy, and said that the light might discover us if anybody came up to the fourth floor.

"That's not likely," I said; "and besides, we can't do without it, for how am I to give you the aroph in the dark?"

"Very good," she replied, "we can put it out afterwards."

Without staying for those preliminary dallyings which are so sweet when one is at ease, we undressed ourselves, and began with all seriousness to play our part, which we did to perfection. We looked—I like a medical student about to perform an operation, and she like a patient, with this difference that it was the patient who arranged the dressing. When she was ready—that is, when she had placed the aroph as neatly as a skull-cap fits a parson—she put herself in the proper position for the preparation to mix with the semen.

The most laughable part of it all was that we were both as serious as two doctors of divinity.

When the introduction of the aroph was perfect the timid lady put out the candle, but a few minutes after it had to be lighted again. I told her politely that I was delighted to begin again, and the voice in which I paid her this compliment made us both burst into laughter.

I didn't take so short a time over my second operation as my first, and my sweetheart, who had been a little put out, was now quite at her ease.

Her modesty had now been replaced by confidence, and as she was looking at the aroph fitted in its place, she shewed me with her pretty finger very evident signs of her co-operation in the work. Then with an affectionate air, she asked me if I would not like to rest, as we had still a good deal to do before our work was at an end.

"You see," said I, "that I do not need rest, and I think we had better set to again."

No doubt she found my reason a good one, for, without saying anything, she put herself ready to begin again, and afterwards we took a good long sleep. When I woke up, feeling as fresh as ever, I asked her to try another operation; and after carrying this through successfully, I determined to be guided by her and take care of myself, for we had to reserve our energies for the following nights. So, about four o'clock in the morning she left me, and softly made her way to her room, and at daybreak I left the hotel under the protection of the scullion, who took me by a private door I did not know of.

About noon, after taking an aromatic bath, I went to call on Mdlle. X—— C—— V——, whom I found sitting up in bed as usual, elegantly attired, and with a happy smile on her lips. She spoke at

such length on her gratitude, and thanked me so often, that, believing myself, and with good cause, to be her debtor, I began to get impatient.

"Is it possible," I said, "that you do not see how degrading your thanks are to me? They prove that you do not love me, or that if you love me, you think my love less strong than yours."

Our conversation then took a tender turn, and we were about to seal our mutual ardours without troubling about the aroph, when prudence bade us beware. It would not have been safe, and we had plenty of time before us. We contented ourselves with a tender embrace till the night should come.

My situation was a peculiar one, for though I was in love with this charminfg girl I did not feel in the least ashamed of having deceived her, especially as what I did could have no effect, the place being taken. It was my self-esteem which made me congratulate myself on the sharp practice which had procured me such pleasures. She told me that she was sorry she had denied me when I had asked her before, and said that she felt now that I had good reason to suspect the reality of her love. I did my best to reassure her, and indeed all suspicions on my part would have been but idle thoughts, as I had succeeded beyond all expectation. However, there is one point upon which I congratulate myself to this day—namely, that during those nightly toils of mine, which did so little towards the

object of her desires, I succeeded in inspiring her with such a feeling of resignation that she promised, of her own accord, not to despair any more, but to trust in and be guided by me. She often told me during our nocturnal conversations that she was happy and would continue to be so, even though the aroph had no effect. Not that she had ceased to believe in it, for she continued the application of the harmless preparation till our last assaults, in which we wanted in those sweet combats to exhaust all the gifts of pleasure.

"Sweetheart," said she, just before we parted finally, "it seems to me that what we have been about is much more likely to create than to destroy, and if the aperture had not been hermetically closed we should doubtless have given the little prisoner a companion."

A doctor of the Sorbonne could not have reasoned better.

Three or four days afterwards I found her thoughtful but quiet. She told me that she had lost all hope of getting rid of her burden before the proper time. All the while, however, her mother persecuted her, and she would have to choose in a few days between making a declaration as to her state and signing the marriage contract. She would accept neither of these alternatives, and had decided on escaping from her home, and asked me to help her in doing so.

I had determined to help her, but I desired to save my reputation, for it might have been troublesome if it had been absolutely known that I had carried her off or furnished her with the means to escape. And as for any other alternative, neither of us had any idea of matrimony.

I left her and went to the Tuileries, where a sacred concert was being given. The piece was a motet composed by Moudonville, the words by the Abbé de Voisenon, whom I had furnished with the idea, "The Israelites on Mount Horeb."

As I was getting out of my carriage, I saw Madame du Rumain descending alone from hers. I ran up to her, and received a hearty welcome. "I am delighted," said she, "to find you here, it is quite a piece of luck. I am going to hear this novel composition, and have two reserved seats. Will you do me the honour of accepting one?"

Although I had my ticket in my pocket I could not refuse so honourable an offer, so, giving her my arm, we walked up to two of the best places in the house.

At Paris no talking is allowed during the performance of sacred music, especially when the piece is heard for the first time; so Madame du Rumain could draw no conclusions from my silence throughout the performance, but she guessed that something was the matter from the troubled and absent expres-

sion of my face, which was by no means natural to me.

"M. Casanova," said she, "be good enough to give me your company for an hour. I want to ask you two or three questions which can only be solved by your cabala. I hope you will oblige me, as I am very anxious to know the answers, but we must be quick as I have an engagement to sup in Paris."

It may be imagined that I did not wait to be asked twice, and as soon as we got to her house I went to work on the questions, and solved them all in less than half an hour.

When I had finished, "M. Casanova," said she, in the kindest manner possible, "what is the matter with you? You are not in your usual state of equanimity, and if I am not mistaken you are dreading some dire event. Or perhaps you are on the eve of taking some important resolution? I am not inquisitive, but if I can be of any service to you at Court, make use of me, and be sure that I will do my best. If necessary, I will go to Versailles tomorrow morning. I know all the ministers. Confide in me your troubles, if I cannot lighten them I can at least share them, and be sure I will keep your counsel."

Her words seemed to me a voice from heaven, a warning from my good genius to open my heart to this lady, who had almost read my thoughts, and had so plainly expressed her interest in my welfare.

After gazing at her for some seconds without speaking, but with a manner that shewed her how grateful I was,—"Yes madam," I said, "I am indeed critically situated, may be on the verge of ruin, but your kindness has calmed my soul and made me once more acquainted with hope. You shall hear how I am placed. I am going to trust you with a secret of the most delicate description, but I can rely on your being as discreet as you are good. And if after hearing my story you deign to give me your advice, I promise to follow it and never to divulge its author."

After this beginning, which gained her close attention, I told her all the circumstances of the case, neither concealing the young lady's name nor any of the circumstances which made it my duty to watch over her welfare. All the same I said nothing about the aroph or the share I had taken in its exhibition. The incident appeared to me too farcical for a serious drama, but I confessed that I had procured the girl drugs in the hope of relieving her of her burden.

After this weighty communication I stopped, and Madame du Rumain remained silent, as if lost in thought, for nearly a quarter of an hour. At last she rose, saying,—

"I am expected at Madame de la Marque's, and I must go, as I am to meet the Bishop of Montrouge, to whom I want to speak, but I hope I shall

eventually be able to help you. Come here the day after to-morrow, you will find me alone; above all, do nothing before you see me. Farewell."

I left her full of hope, and resolved to follow her advice and hers only in the troublesome affair in which I was involved.

The Bishop of Montrouge whom she was going to address on an important matter, the nature of which was well known to me, was the Abbé de Voisenon, who was thus named because he often went there. Montrouge is an estate near Paris, belonging to the Duc de la Valière.

I saw Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— the following day, and contented myself with telling her that in a couple of days I hope to give her some good news. I was pleased with her manner, which was full of resignation and trust in my endeavours.

The day after, I went to Madame du Rumain's punctually at eight. The porter told me that I should find the doctor with my lady, but I went upstairs all the same, and as soon as the doctor saw me he took his leave. His name was Herrenschwand, and all the ladies in Paris ran after him. Poor Poinsinet put him in a little one-act play called *Le Cercle,* which, though of very ordinary merit, was a great success.

"My dear sir," said Madame du Rumain, as soon as we were alone, "I have succeeded in my endeavours on your behalf, and it is now for you to keep

secret my share in the matter. After I had pondered over the case of conscience you submitted to me, I went to the convent of C—— where the abbess is a friend of mine, and I entrusted her with the secret, relying on her discretion. We agreed that she should receive the young lady in her convent, and give her a good lay-sister to nurse her through her confinement. Now you will not deny," said she, with a smile, "that the cloisters are of some use. Your young friend must go by herself to the convent with a letter for the abbess, which I will give her, and which she must deliver to the porter. She will then be admitted and lodged in a suitable chamber. She will receive no visitors nor any letters that have not passed through my hands. The abbess will bring her answers to me, and I will pass them on to you. You must see that her only correspondent must be yourself, and you must receive news of her welfare only through me. On your hand in writing to her you must leave the address to be filled in by me. I had to tell the abbess the lady's name, but not yours as she did not require it.

"Tell your young friend all about our plans, and when she is ready come and tell me, and I will give you the letter to the abbess. Tell her to bring nothing but what is strictly necessary, above all no diamonds or trinkets of any value. You may assure her that the abbess will be friendly, will come and see her every now and then, will give her proper

books—in a word, that she will be well looked after. Warn her not to confide in the lay-sister who will attend on her. I have no doubt she is an excellent woman, but she is a nun, and the secret might leak out. After she is safely delivered, she must go to confession and perform her Easter duties, and the abbess will give her a certificate of good behaviour; and she can then return to her mother, who will be too happy to see her to say anything more about the marriage, which, of course, she ought to give as her reason of her leaving home."

After many expressions of my gratitude to her, and of my admiration of her plan, I begged her to give me the letter on the spot, as there was no time to be lost. She was good enough to go at once to her desk, where she wrote as follows:

"My dear abbess,—The young lady who will give you this letter is the same of whom we have spoken. She wishes to spend three or four months under your protection, to recover her peace of mind, to perform her devotions, and to make sure that when she returns to her mother nothing more will be said about the marriage, which is partly the cause of her temporary separation from her family."

After reading it to me, she put it into my hands unsealed that Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— might be able to read it. The abbess in question was a princess, and her convent was consequently a place above all suspicion. As Madame du Rumain gave me

the letter, I felt such an impulse of gratitude that I fell on my knees before her. This generous woman was useful to me on another occasion, of which I shall speak later on.

After leaving Madame du Rumain I went straight to the "Hôtel de Bretagne," where I saw Mdlle. X—— C—— V——, who had only time to tell me that she was engaged for the rest of the day, but that she would come to the garret at eleven o'clock that night, and that then we could talk matters over. I was overjoyed at this arrangement, as I foresaw that after this would come the awakening from a happy dream, and that I should be alone with her no more.

Before leaving the hotel I gave the word to Madelaine, who in turn got the scullion to have everything in readiness.

I kept the appointment, and had not long to wait for my mistress. After making her read the letter written by Madame du Rumain (whose name I withheld from her without her taking offence thereat) I put out the candle, and without troubling about the aroph, we set ourselves to the pleasant task of proving that we truly loved each other.

In the morning, before we separated, I gave her all the instructions I had received from Madame du Rumain; and we agreed that she should leave the house at eight o'clock with such things as she absolutely required, that she should take a coach to the

Place Maubert, then send it away, and take another to the Place Antoine, and again, farther on, a third coach, in which she was to go to the convent named. I begged her not to forget to burn all the letters she had received from me, and to write to me from the convent as often as she could, to seal her letters but to leave the address blank. She promised to carry out my instructions, and I then made her accept a packet of two hundred louis, of which she might chance to be in need. She wept, more for my situation than her own, but I consoled her by saying that I had plenty of money and powerful patrons.

"I will set out," said she, "the day after to-morrow, at the hour agreed on." And thereupon, I having promised to come to the house the day after her departure, as if I knew nothing about it, and to let her knoow what passed, we embraced each other tenderly, and I left her.

I was troubled in thinking about her fate. She had wit and courage, but when experience is wanting wit often leads men to commit acts of great folly.

The day after the morrow I took a coach, and posted myself in a corner of the street by which she had to pass. I saw her come, get out of the coach, pay the coachman, go down a narrow street, and a few minutes after reappear again, veiled and hooded, carrying a small parcel in her hand. She then took

another conveyance which went off in the direction we had agreed upon.

The day following being Low Sunday, I felt that I must present myself at the "Hotel de Bretagne," for as I went there every day before the daughter's flight I could not stop going there without strengthening any suspicions which might be entertained about me. But it was a painful task. I had to appear at my ease and cheerful in a place where I was quite sure all would be sadness and confusion. I must say that it was an affair requiring higher powers of impudence than fall to the lot of most men.

I chose a time when all the family would be together at table, and I walked straight into the dining-room. I entered with my usual cheerful manner, and sat down by madame, a little behind her, pretending not to see her surprise, which, however, was plainly to be seen, her whole face being flushed with rage and astonishment. I had not been long in the room before I asked where her daughter was. She turned round, looked me through and through, and said not a word.

"Is she ill?" said I.

"I know nothing about her."

This remark, which was pronounced in a dry manner, put me at my ease, as I now felt at liberty to look concerned. I sat there for a quarter of an hour, playing the part of grave and astonished si-

lence, and then, rising, I asked if I could do anything, for which all my reward was a cold expression of thanks. I then left the room and went to Mdlle. X—— C—— V——'s chamber as if I had thought she was there, but found only Madelaine. I asked her with a meaning look where her mistress was. She replied by begging me to tell her if I knew.

"Has she gone by herself?"

"I know nothing at all about it, sir, but they say you know all. I beg of you to leave me."

Pretending to be in the greatest astonishment, I slowly walked away and took a coach, glad to have accomplished this painful duty. After the reception I had met with I could without affectation pose as offended, and visit the family no more, for whether I were guilty or innocent, Madame X—— C—— V—— must see that her manner had been plain enough for me to know what it meant.

I was looking out of my window at an early hour two or three days afterwards, when a coach stopped before my door, and Madame X—— C—— V——, escorted by M. Farsetti got out. I made haste to meet them on the stair, and welcomed them, saying I was glad they had done me the honour to come and take breakfast with me, pretending not to know of any other reason. I asked them to sit down before the fire, and enquired after the lady's health; but without noticing my question

she said that she had not come to take breakfast, but to have some serious conversation.

"Madam," said I, "I am your humble servant; but first of all pray be seated."

She sat down, while Farsetti continued standing. I did not press him, but turning towards the lady begged her to command me.

"I am come here," she said, "to ask you to give me back my daughter if she be in your power, or to tell me where she is."

"Your daughter, madam? I know nothing about her! Do you think me capable of a crime?"

"I do not accuse you of abducting her; I have not come here to reproach you nor to utter threats, I have only come to ask you to shew yourself my friend. Help me to get my daughter again this very day; you will give me my life. I am certain that you know all. You were her only confidant and her only friend; you passed hours with her every day; she must have told you of her secret. Pity a bereaved mother! So far no one knows of the facts; give her back to me and all shall be forgotten, and her honour saved."

"Madam, I feel for you acutely, but I repeat that I know nothing of your daughter."

The poor woman, whose grief touched me, fell at my feet and burst into tears. I was going to lift her from the ground, when Farsetti told her, in a voice full of indignation, that she should blush to

humble herself in such a manner before a man of my description. I drew myself up, and looking at him scornfully said,—

"You insolent scoundrel! What do you mean by talking of me like that?"

"Everybody is certain that you know all about it."

"Then they are impudent fools, like you. Get out of my house this instant and wait for me, I will be with you in a quarter of an hour."

So saying, I took the poor chevalier by the shoulders, and giving him sundry shakes I turned him out of the room. He came back and called to the lady to come, too, but she rose and tried to quiet me.

"You ought to be more considerate towards a lover," said she, "for he would marry my daughter now, even after what she has done."

"I am aware of the fact, madam, and I have no doubt that his courtship was one of the chief reasons which made your daughter resolve to leave her home, for she hated him even more than she hated the *fermier-général*."

"She has behaved very badly, but I promise not to say anything more about marrying her. But I am sure you know all about it, as you gave her fifty louis, without which she could not have done anything."

"Nay, not so."

"Do not deny it, sir; here is the evidence—a small piece of your letter to her."

She gave me a scrap of the letter I had sent the daughter, with the fifty louis for her brother. It contained the following lines:

"I hope that these wretched louis will convince you that I am ready to sacrifice everything, my life if need be, to assure you of my affection."

"I am far from disavowing this evidence of my esteem for your daughter, but to justfy myself I am obliged to tell you a fact which I should have otherwise kept secret—namely, that I furnished your daughter with this sum to enable her to pay your son's debts, for which he thanked me in a letter which I can shew you."

"My son?"

"Your son, madam."

"I will make you an ample atonement for my suspicions."

Before I had time to make any objection, she ran down to fetch Farsetti, who was waiting in the courtyard, and made him come up and hear what I had just told her.

"That's not a likely tale," said the insolent fellow.

I looked at him contemptuously, and told him he was not worth convincing, but that I would beg the lady to ask her son and see whether I told the truth.

"I assure you," I added, "that I always urged your daughter to marry M. de la Popelinière."

"How can you have the face to say that," said Farsetti, "when you talk in the letter of your affection?"

"I do not deny it," said I. "I loved her, and I was proud of my affection for her. This affection, of whatever sort it may have been (and that is not this gentleman's business), was the ordinary topic of conversation between us. If she had told me that she was going to leave her home, I should either have dissuaded her or gone with her, for I loved her as I do at this moment; but I would never have given her money to go alone."

"My dear Casanova," said the mother, "if you will help me to find her I shall believe in your innocence."

"I shall be delighted to aid you, and I promise to commence the quest to-day."

"As soon as you have any news, come and tell me."

"You may trust me to do so," said I, and we parted.

I had to play my part carefully; especially it was essential that I should behave in public in a manner consistent with my professions. Accordingly, the next day I went to M. Chaban, first commissary of police, requesting him to institute enquiries respecting the flight of Mdlle. X—— C—— V——. I was

sure that in this way the real part I had taken in the matter would be the better concealed; but the commissary, who had the true spirit of his profession, and had liked me when he first saw me six years before, began to laugh when he heard what I wanted him to do.

"Do you really want the police to discover," said he, "where the pretty Englishwoman is to be found?"

"Certainly."

It then struck me that he was trying to make me talk and to catch me tripping, and I had no doubt of it when I met Farsetti going in as I was coming out.

Next day I went to acquaint Madame X—— C—— V—— with the steps I had taken, though as yet my efforts had not been crowned with success.

"I have been more fortunate than you," said she, "and if you will come with me to the place where my daughter has gone, and will join me in persuading her to return, all will be well."

"Certainly," said I, "I shall be most happy to accompany you."

Taking me at my word, she put on her cloak, and leaning on my arm walked along till we came to a coach. She then gave me a slip of paper, begging me to tell the coachman to drive us to the address thereon.

I was on thorns, and my heart beat fast, for I thought I should have to read out the address of

the convent. I do not know what I should have done if my fears had been well grounded, but I should certainly not have gone to the convent. At last I read what was written; it was "Place Maubert," and I grew calm once more.

I told the coachman to drive us to the Place Maubert. We set off, and in a short time stopped at the opening of an obscure back street before a dirty-looking house, which did not give one a high idea of the character of its occupants. I gave Madame X—— C—— V—— my arm, and she had the satisfaction of looking into every room in the five floors of the house, but what she sought for was not there, and I expected to see her overwhelmed with grief. I was mistaken, however. She looked distressed but satisfied, and her eyes seemed to ask pardon of me. She had found out from the coachman, who had taken her daughter on the first stage of her journey, that she had alighted in front of the house in question, and had gone down the back street. She told me that the scullion had confessed that he had taken me letters twice from his young mistress, and that Madelaine said all the time that she was sure her mistress and I were in love with each other. They played their parts well.

As soon as I had seen Madame X—— C—— V—— safely home, I went to Madame du Rumain to tell her what had happened; and I then wrote to

my fair recluse, telling her what had gone on in the world since her disappearance.

Three or four days after this date, Madame du Rumain gave me the first letter I received from Mdlle. X—— C—— V——. She spoke in it of the quiet life she was leading, and her gratitude to me, praised the abbess and the lay-sister, and gave me the titles of the books they lent her, which she liked reading. She also informed me what money she had spent, and said she was happy in everything, almost in being forbidden to leave her room.

I was delighted with her letter, but much more with the abbess's epistle to Madame du Rumain. She was evidently fond of the girl, and could not say too much in her praise, saying how sweet-tempered, clever, and lady-like she was; winding up by assuring her friend that she went to see her every day.

I was charmed to see the pleasure this letter afforded Madame du Rumain—pleasure which was increased by the perusal of the letter I had received. The only persons who were displeased were the poor mother, the frightful Farsetti, and the old *fermier,* whose misfortune was talked about in the clubs, the Palais-Royal, and the coffee-houses. Everybody put me down for some share in the business, but I laughed at their gossip, believing that I was quite safe.

All the same, la Popelinière took the adventure philosophically and made a one-act play out of it,

which he had acted at his little theatre in Paris. Three months afterwards he got married to a very pretty girl, the daughter of a Bordeaux alderman. He died in the course of two years, leaving his widow pregnant with a son, who came into the world six months after the father's death. The unworthy heir to the rich man had the face to accuse the widow of adultery, and got the child declared illegitimate to the eternal shame of the court which gave this iniquitous judgment and to the grief of every honest Frenchman. The iniquitous nature of the judgment was afterwards more clearly demonstrated—putting aside the fact that nothing could be said against the mother's character—by the same court having the face to declare a child born eleven months after the father's death legitimate.

I continued for ten days to call upon Madame X—— C—— V——, but finding myself coldly welcomed, decided to go there no more.

CHAPTER VIII

FRESH ADVENTURES—J. J. ROUSSEAU—I SET UP A BUSINESS—CASTEL-BAJAC—A LAWSUIT IS COMMENCED AGAINST ME—M. DE SARTINE

Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— had now been in the convent for a month, and her affair had ceased to be a common topic of conversation. I thought I should hear no more of it, but I was mistaken. I continued, however, to amuse myself, and my pleasure in spending freely quite prevented me from thinking about the future. The Abbé de Bernis, whom I went to see regularly once a week, told me one day that the comptroller-general often enquired how I was getting on. "You are wrong," said the abbé, "to neglect him." He advised me to say no more about my claims, but to communicate to him the means I had spoken of for increasing the revenues of the state. I laid too great store by the advice of the man who had made my fortune not to follow it. I went to the comptroller, and trusting in his probity I explained my scheme to him. This was to pass a law by which every estate, except that

left by father to son, should furnish the treasury with one year's income; every deed of gift formally drawn up being subject to the same provision. It seemed to me that the law could not give offence to anyone; the heir had only to imagine that he had inherited a year later than was actually the case. The minister was of the same opinion as myself, told me that there would not be the slightest difficulty involved, and assured me that my fortune was made. In a week afterwards his place was taken by M. de Silhouette, and when I called on the new minister he told me coldly that when my scheme became law he would tell me. It became law two years afterwards, and when, as the originator of the scheme, I attempted to get my just reward, they laughed in my face.

Shortly after, the Pope died, and he was succeeded by the Venetian Rezzonico, who created my patron, the Abbé de Bernis, a cardinal. However, he had to go into exile by order of the king two days after his gracious majesty had presented him with the red cap: so good a thing it is to be the friend of kings!

The disgrace of my delightful abbé left me without a patron, but I had plenty of money, and so was enabled to bear this misfortune with resignation.

For having undone all the work of Cardinal Richelieu, for having changed the old enmity between

France and Austria into friendship, for delivering Italy from the horrors of war which befell her whenever these countries had a bone to pick, although he was the first cardinal made by a pope who had had plenty of opportunities for discovering his character, merely because, on being asked, he had given it as his opinion that the Prince de Soubise was not a fit person to command the French armies, this great ecclesiastic was driven into exile. The moment the Pompadour heard of this opinion of his, she decreed his banishment—a sentence which was unpopular with all classes of society; but they consoled themselves with epigrams, and the new cardinal was soon forgotten. Such is the character of the French people; it cares neither for its own misfortunes nor for those of others, if only it can extract laughter from them.

In my time epigrammatists and poetasters who assailed ministers or even the king's mistresses were sent to the Bastille, but the wits still persisted in being amusing, and there were some who considered a jest incomplete that was not followed by a prosecution. A man whose name I have forgotten—a great lover of notoriety—appropriated the following verses by the younger Crébellon, and went to the Bastille rather than disown them.

"All the world's upside down!
Jupiter has donned the gown—the King.

Venus mounts the council stair—the Pompadour.
Plutus trifles with the fair—M. de Boulogne.
Mercury in mail is drest—Maréchal de Richelieu.
Mighty *Mars* has turned a priest—the Duc de Clermont, abbé of St. Germain-des-près."

Crèbillon, who was not the sort of man to conceal his writings, told the Duc de Choiseul that he had written some verses exactly like these, but that it was possible the prisoner had been inspired with precisely the same ideas. This jest was applauded, and the author of "The Sofa" was let alone.

Cardinal de Bernis passed ten years in exile, *procul negotiis,* but he was not happy, as he told me himself when I knew him in Rome fifteen years afterwards. It is said that it is better to be a minister than a king—an opinion which seems ridiculous when it is analyzed. The question is, which is the better, independence or its contrary. The axiom may possibly be verified in a despotic government under an absurd, weak, or careless king who serves as a mere mask for his master the minister; but in all other cases it is an absurdity.

Cardinal de Bernis was never recalled; there is no instance of Louis XV. having ever recalled a minister whom he had disgraced; but on the death of Rezzonico he had to go to Rome to be present at the conclave, and there he remained as French ambassador.

About this time Madame d'Urfé conceived a wish to make the acquaintance of J. J. Rousseau, and we went to call upon him at Montmorenci, on the pretext of giving him music to copy—an occupation in which he was very skilled. He was paid twice the sum given to any other copyist, but he guaranteed that the work should be faultlessly done. At that period of his life copying music was the great writer's sole means of subsistence.

We found him to be a man of a simple and modest demeanour, who talked well, but who was not otherwise distinguished either intellectually or physically. We did not think him what would be called a good-natured man, and as he was far from having the manners of good society Madame d'Urfé did not hesitate to pronounce him vulgar. We saw the woman with whom he lived, and of whom we had heard, but she scarcely looked at us. On our way home we amused ourselves by talking about Rousseau's eccentric habits.

I will here note down the visit of the Prince of Conti (father of the gentleman who is now known as the Comte de la March) to Rousseau.

The prince—a good-natured man—went by himself to Montmorenci, on purpose to spend a day in conversation with the philosopher, who was even then famous. He found him in the park, accosted him, and said that he had come to dine with him and to talk without restraint.

"Your highness will fare but badly," said Rousseau: "however, I will tell them to lay another knife and fork."

The philosopher gave his instructions, and came out and rejoined the prince, with whom he walked up and down for two or three hours. When it was dinner-time he took the prince into his dining-room, where the table was laid for three.

"Who is going to dine with us?" said the prince. "I thought we were to be alone."

"The third party," said Rousseau, "is my other self—a being who is neither my wife, nor my mistress, nor my servant-maid, nor my mother, nor my daughter, but yet personates all these characters at once."

"I daresay, my dear fellow, I daresay; but as I came to dine with you alone, I will not dine with your other self, but will leave you with all the rest of you to keep your company."

So saying the prince bade him farewell and went out. Rousseau did not try to keep him.

About this time I witnessed the failure of a play called *Aristides' Daughter,* written by the ingenious Madame de Graffini, who died of vexation five days after her play was damned. The Abbé de Voisenon was horrified, as he had advised the lady to produce it, and was thought to have had some hand in its composition, as well as in that of the *Lettres Peruviennes* and *Cenie.* By a curious coincidence,

just about the same date, Rezzonico's mother died of joy because her son had become pope. Grief and joy kill many more women than men, which proves that if women have more feeling than men they have also less strength.

When Madame d'Urfé thought that my adopted son was comfortably settled in Viar's house, she made me go with her and pay him a visit. I found him lodged like a prince, well dressed, made much of, and almost looked up to. I was astonished, for this was more than I had bargained for. Madame d'Urfé had given him masters of all sorts, and a pretty little pony for him to learn riding on. He was styled M. le Comte d'Aranda. A girl of sixteen, Viar's daughter, a fine-looking young woman, was appointed to look after him, and she was quite proud to call herself my lord's governess. She assured Madame d'Urfé that she took special care of him; that as soon as he woke she brought him his breakfast in bed; that she then dressed him, and did not leave his side the whole day. Madame d'Urfé approved of everything, told the girl to take even greater care of the count, and promised that she should not go unrewarded. As for the young gentleman, he was evidently quite happy, as he told me himself again and again, but I suspected a mystery somewhere, and determined that I would go and see him by myself another time and solve it.

On our journey home I told Madame d'Urfé how

grateful I was for all her goodness to the boy, and that I approved of all the arrangements that had been made with the exception of the name Aranda, "which," said I, "may some day prove a thorn in his side." She answered that the lad had said enough to convince her that he had a right to bear that name. "I had," she said, "in my desk a seal with the arms of the house of Aranda, and happening to take it up I shewed it him as we shew trinkets to children to amuse them, but as soon as he saw it he burst out,—

"'How came you to have my arms?'

"Your arms!" I answered. "I got this seal from the Comte d'Aranda; how can you prove that you are a scion of that race?"

"'Do not ask me, madam; my birth is a secret I can reveal to no one.'"

The imposition and above all the impudence of the young knave astounded me. I should not have thought him capable of it, and a week after I went to see him by myself to get at the bottom of all this mystery.

I found my young count with Viar, who, judging by the awe the child shewed of me, must have thought he belonged to me. He was unsparing in his praises of his pupil, saying that he played the flute capitally, danced and fenced admirably, rode well, and wrote a good hand. He shewed me the pens he had cut himself with three, five, and even

nine points, and begged to be examined on heraldry, which, as the master observed, was so necessary a science for a young nobleman.

The young gentleman then commenced in the jargon of heraldry to blazon his own pretended arms, and I felt much inclined to burst into laughter, partly because I did not understand a word he said, and partly because he seemed to think the matter as important as would a country squire with his thirty-two quarters. However, I was delighted to see his dexterity in penmanship, which was undoubtedly very great, and I expressed my satisfaction to Viar, who soon left us to ourselves. We proceeded into the garden.

"Will you kindly inform me," I said, "how you can be so foolish as to call yourself the Comte d'Aranda?"

He replied, with the utmost calmness, "I know it is foolish, but leave me my title; it is of service to me here and gains me respect."

"It is an imposition I cannot wink at, as it may be fraught with serious results, and may do harm to both of us. I should not have thought that at your age you would be capable of such a knavish trick. I know you did it out of stupidity, but after a certain limit stupidity becomes criminal; and I cannot see how I am to remedy your fault without disgracing you in the eyes of Madame d'Urfé."

I kept on scolding him till he burst into tears, saying,—

"I had rather the shame of being sent back to my mother than the shame of confessing to Madame d'Urfé that I had imposed on her; and I could not bear to stay here if I had to give up my name."

Seeing that I could do nothing with him, unless, indeed, I sent him to some place far removed from Paris under his proper name, I told him to take comfort as I would try and do the best I could for both of us.

"And now tell me—and take care to tell the truth—what sort of feelings does Viar's daughter entertain for you?"

"I think, papa, that this is a case in which the reserve commended by yourself, as well as by mother, would be appropriate."

"Yes, that sort of answer tells me a good deal, but I think you are rather too knowing for your age. And you may as well observe that when you are called upon for a confession, reserve is out of place, and it's a confession I require from you."

"Well, papa, Viar's daughter is very fond of me, and she shews her love in all sorts of ways."

"And do you love her?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Is she much with you in the morning?"

"She is with me the whole day."

"She is present when you go to bed?"

"Yes, she helps me to undress."

"Nothing else?"

"I do not care to tell you."

I was astonished at the measured way in which he answered me, and as I had heard enough to guess that the boy and girl were very good friends indeed, I contented myself with warning him to take care of his health, and with this I left him.

Some time after, my thoughts were occupied with a business speculation which all my calculations assured me would be extremely profitable. The plan was to produce on silks, by means of printing, the exquisite designs which are produced at Lyons by the tedious process of weaving, and thus to give customers excellent value at much lower prices. I had the requisite knowledge of chemistry, and enough capital to make the thing a success. I obtained the assistance of a man with the necessary technical skill and knowledge, intending to make him my manager.

I told my plan to the Prince de Conti, who encouraged me to persevere, promising me his patronage, and all the privileges I could wish for. That decided me to begin.

I rented a very large house near the Temple for a thousand crowns per annum. The house contained a spacious hall, in which I meant to put my workmen; another hall which was to be the shop; numer-

ous rooms for my workpeople to live in; and a nice room for myself in case I cared to live on the premises.

I made the scheme into a company with thirty shares, of which I gave five to my designer, keeping the remaining twenty-five to distribute to those who were inclined to join the company. I gave one to a doctor who, on giving surety, became the storekeeper, and came to live in the house with his whole family; and I engaged four servants, a waiting-maid, and a porter. I had to give another share to an accountant, who furnished me with two clerks, who also took up their abode in the house. The carpenters, blacksmiths, and painters worked hard from morning to night, and in less than three weeks the place was ready. I told the manager to engage twenty girls to paint, who were to be paid every Saturday. I stocked the warehouse with three hundred pieces of sarcenet and camlet of different shades and colours to receive the designs, and I paid for everything in ready money.

I had made an approximate calculation with my manager that I should have to spend three hundred thousand francs, and that would not break me. If the worst happened I could fall back on my shares, which produced a good income, but I hoped I should not be compelled to do so, as I wanted to have an income of two hundred thousand francs a year.

All the while I did not conceal from myself that

the speculation might be my ruin, if custom did not come in, but on looking at my beautiful materials these fears were dispelled, especially as I heard everybody saying that I sold them much too cheap.

To set up the business I spent in the course of a month about sixty thousand francs, and my weekly expenses amounted to twelve hundred francs.

As for Madame d'Urfé she laughed every time she saw me, for she was quite certain that this business was only meant to put the curious off the scent and to preserve my incognito: so persuaded was she of my omnipotence.

The sight of twenty girls, all more or less pretty, the eldest of whom was not twenty-five, far from making me tremble as it ought, delighted me. I fancied myself in the midst of a seraglio, and I amused myself by watching their meek and modest looks as they did their work under the direction of the foreman. The best paid did not get more than twenty-four sous a day, and all of them had excellent reputations, for they had been selected at her own request by the manager's wife, a devout woman of ripe age, whom I hoped to find obliging if the fancy seized me to test her choice. Manon Baletti did not share my satisfaction in them. She trembled to see me the owner of a harem, well knowing that sooner or later the barque of my virtue would run on the rocks. She scolded me well about these girls, though I assured her that none of them slept in the house.

This business increased my own ideas of my importance; partly from the thought that I was on the high road to fortune, and partly because I furnished so many people with the means of subsistence. Alas! I was too fortunate; and my evil genius soon crossed my career.

It was now three months since Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— had gone into the convent, and the time of her delivery drew near. We wrote to each other twice a week, and I considered the matter happily settled; M. de la Popelinière had married, and when Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— returned to her mother there would be nothing more to be said. But just at this period, when my happiness seemed assured, the hidden fire leapt forth and threatened to consume me; how, the reader will see.

One day after leaving Madame d'Urfé's I went to walk in the Tuileries. I had taken a couple of turns in the chief walk when I saw that an old woman, accompanied by a man dressed in black, was looking at me closely and communicating her observations to her companion. There was nothing very astonishing in this in a public place, and I continued my walk, and on turning again saw the same couple still watching me. In my turn I looked at them, and remembered seeing the man in a gaming-house, where he was known by the name of Castel-Bajac. On scrutinizing the features of the hag, I at last succeeded in recollecting who she was; she was the

woman to whom I had taken Mdlle. X—— C—— V——. I felt certain that she had recognized me, but not troubling myself about the matter I left the gardens to walk elsewhere. The day after next, just as I was going to get into my carriage, a man of evil aspect gave me a paper and asked me to read it. I opened it, but finding it covered with an illegible scrawl I gave it him back, telling him to read it himself. He did so, and I found myself summoned to appear before the commissary of police to answer to the plea which the midwife (whose name I forget) brought against me.

Although I could guess what the charge would be, and was certain that the midwife could furnish no proofs of her accusation, I went to an attorney I knew and told him to appear for me. I instructed him that I did not know any midwife in Paris whatsoever. The attorney waited on the commissary, and on the day after brought me a copy of the pleas.

The midwife said that I came to her one night, accompanied by a young lady about five months with child, and that, holding a pistol in one hand and a packet of fifty louis in the other, I made her promise to procure abortion. We both of us (so she said) had masks on, thus shewing that we had been at the opera ball. Fear, she said, had prevented her from flatly refusing to grant my request; but she had enough presence of mind to say that the necessary drugs were not ready, that she would have all in or-

der by the next night; whereupon we left, promising to return. In the belief that we would not fail to keep the appointment, she went in to M. Castel-Bajac to ask him to hide in the next room that she might be protected from my fury, and that he might be a witness of what I said, but she had not seen me again. She added that she would have given information the day after the event if she had known who I was, but since M. Castel-Bajac had told her my name on her recognizing me in the Tuileries, she had thought it her bounden duty to deliver me to the law that she might be compensated for the violence I had used to her. And this document was signed by the said Castel-Bajac as a witness.

"This is an evident case of libel," said my attorney, "at least, if she can't prove the truth of her allegations. My advice to you is to take the matter before the criminal lieutenant, who will be able to give you the satisfaction you require."

I authorized him to do what he thought advisable, and three or four days after he told me that the lieutenant wished to speak to me in private, and would expect me the same day at three o'clock in the afternoon.

As will be expected, I was punctual to the appointment. I found the magistrate to be a polite and good-hearted gentleman. He was, in fact, the well-known M. de Sartine, who was the chief of police two years later. His office of criminal lieutenant was

saleable, and M. de Sartine sold it when he was appointed head of the police.

As soon as I had made my bow, he asked me to sit down by him, and addressed me as follows:

"I have asked you to call upon me in the interests of both of us, as in your position our interests are inseparable. If you are innocent of the charge which has been brought against you, you are quite right to appeal to me; but before proceedings begin, you should tell me the whole truth. I am ready to forget my position as judge, and to give you my help, but you must see yourself that to prove the other side guilty of slander, you must prove yourself innocent. What I want from you is an informal and strictly confidential declaration, for the case against you is a serious one, and of such a kind as to require all your efforts to wipe off this blot upon you honour. Your enemies will not respect your delicacy of feeling. They will press you so hard that you will either be obliged to submit to a shameful sentence, or to wound your feelings of honour in proving your innocence. You see I am confiding in you, for in certain cases honour seems so precious a thing to me that I am ready to defend it with all the power of the law. Pay me back, then, in the same coin, trust in me entirely, tell me the whole story without any reserves, and you may rely upon my good offices. All will be well if you are innocent, for I shall not be the less a judge because I am your friend; but if you are

guilty I am sorry for you, for I warn you that I shall be just."

After doing my best to express my gratitude to him, I said that my position did not oblige me to make any reservations on account of honour, and that I had, consequently, no informal statement to make him.

"The midwife," I added, "is absolutely unknown to me. She is most likely an abandoned woman, who with her worthy companion wants to cheat me of my money."

"I should be delighted to think so," he answered, "but admitting the fact, see how chance favours her, and makes it a most difficult thing for you to prove your innocence.

"The young lady disappeared three months ago. She was known to be your intimate friend, you called upon her at all hours; you spent a considerable time with her the day before she disappeared, and no one knows what has become of her; but everyone's suspicions point at you, and paid spies are continually dogging your steps. The midwife sent me a requisition yesterday by her counsel, Vauversin. She says that the pregnant lady you brought to her house is the same whom Madame X—— C—— V—— is searching for. She also says that you both wore black dominoes, and the police have ascertained that you were both at the ball in black dominoes on the same night as that on which the midwife says you

came to her house; you are also known to have left the ball-room together. All this, it is true, does not constitute full proof of your guilt, but it makes one tremble for your innocence."

"What cause have I to tremble?"

"What cause! Why a false witness, easily enough hired for a little money, might swear with impunity that he saw you come from the opera together; and a coachman in the same way might swear he had taken you to the midwife's. In that case I should be compelled to order your arrest and examination, with a view to ascertain the name of the person whom you took with you. Do you realize that you are accused of procuring abortion; that three months have gone by without the lady's retreat having been discovered; that she is said to be dead. Do you realize, in short, what a very serious charge murder is?"

"Certainly; but if I die innocent, you will have condemned me wrongly, and will be more to be pitied than I."

"Yes, yes, but that wouldn't make your case any better. You may be sure, however, that I will not condemn an innocent man; but I am afraid that you will be a long time in prison before you succeed in proving your innocence. To be brief, you see that in twenty-four hours the case looks very bad, and in the course of a week it might look very much worse. My interest was aroused in your favour by

the evident absurdity of the accusations, but it is the other circumstances about the case which make it a serious one for you. I can partly understand the circumstances, and the feelings of love and honour which bid you be silent. I have spoken to you, and I hope you will have no reserves with me. I will spare you all the unpleasant circumstances which threaten you, believing, as I do, that you are innocent. Tell me all, and be sure that the lady's honour will not suffer; but if, on the other hand, you are unfortunately guilty of the crimes laid to your charge, I advise you to be prudent, and to take steps which it is not my business to suggest. I warn you that in three or four days I shall cite you to the bar of the court, and that you will then find in me only the judge—just, certainly, but severe and impartial."

I was petrified, for these words shewed me my danger in all its nakedness. I saw how I should esteem this worthy man's good offices, and said to him in quite another tone, that innocent as I was, I saw that my best course was to throw myself on his kindness respecting Mdlle. X—— C—— V——, who had committed no crime, but would lose her reputation by this unhappy business.

"I know where she is," I added, "and I may tell you that she would never have left her mother if she had not endeavoured to force her into a marriage she abhorred."

"Well, but the man is now married; let her

return to her mother's house, and you will be safe, unless the midwife persists in maintaining that you incited her to procure abortion."

"There is no abortion in the matter; but other reasons prevent her returning to her family. I can tell you no more without obtaining the consent of another party. If I succeed in doing so I shall be able to throw the desired light on the question. Be kind enough to give me a second hearing on the day after to-morrow."

"I understand. I shall be delighted to hear what you have to say. I thank and congratulate you. Farewell!"

I was on the brink of the precipice, but I was determined to leave the kingdom rather than betray the honour of my poor dear sweetheart. If it had been possible, I would gladly have put an end to the case with money; but it was too late. I was sure that Farsetti had the chief hand in all this trouble, that he was continually on my track, and that he paid the spies mentioned by M. de Sartine. He it was who had set Vauversin, the barrister, after me, and I had no doubt that he would do all in his power to ruin me.

I felt that my only course was to tell the whole story to M. de Sartine, but to do that I required Madame du Rumain's permission.

CHAPTER IX

MY EXAMINATION—I GIVE THE CLERK THREE HUNDRED LOUIS—THE MIDWIFE AND CASTEL-BAJAC IMPRISONED—MDLLE. X. C. V. IS BROUGHT TO BED OF A SON AND OBLIGES HER MOTHER TO MAKE ME AMENDS—THE SUIT AGAINST ME IS QUASHED—MDLLE. X. C. V. GOES WITH HER MOTHER TO BRUSSELS AND FROM THENCE TO VENICE, WHERE SHE BECOMES A GREAT LADY—MY WORK-GIRLS—MADAME BARET—I AM ROBBED, PUT IN PRISON, AND SET AT LIBERTY AGAIN—I GO TO HOLLAND—HELVETIUS' "ESPRIT"—PICCOLOMINI.

The day after my interview with M. de Sartine I waited on Madame du Rumain at an early hour. Considering the urgency of the case I took the liberty of rousing her from her slumbers, and as soon as she was ready to receive me I told her all.

"There can be no hesitation in the matter," said this delightful woman. "We must make a confidant of M. de Sartine, and I will speak to him myself to-day without fail."

Forthwith she went to her desk and wrote to the criminal lieutenant asking him to see her at

three o'clock in the afternoon. In less than an hour the servant returned with a note in which he said he would expect her. We agreed that I should come again in the evening, when she would tell me the result of her interview.

I went to the house at five o'clock, and had only a few minutes to wait.

"I have concealed nothing," said she; "he knows that she is on the eve of her confinement, and that you are not the father, which speaks highly for your generosity. I told him that as soon as the confinement was over, and the young lady had recovered her health, she would return to her mother, though she would make no confession, and that the child should be well looked after. You have now nothing to fear, and can calm yourself; but as the case must go on you will be cited before the court the day after to-morrow. I advise you to see the clerk of the court on some pretext or other, and to make him accept a sum of money."

I was summoned to appear, and I appeared. I saw M. de Sartine, *sedentem pro tribunali*. At the end of the sitting he told me that he was obliged to remand me, and that during my remand I must not leave Paris or get married, as all my civil rights were in suspense pending the decision. I promised to follow his commands.

I acknowledged in my examination that I was at the ball in a black domino on the night named in

my accusation, but I denied everything else. As for Mdlle. X—— C—— V——, I said that neither I nor anyone of her family had any suspicion that she was with child.

Recollecting that I was an alien, and that this circumstance might make Vauversin call for my arrest, on the plea that I might fly the kingdom, I thought the moment opportune for making interest with the clerk of the court, and I accordingly paid him a visit. After telling him of my fears, I slipped into his hand a packet of three hundred louis, for which I did not ask for a receipt, saying that they were to defray expenses if I were mulcted in costs. He advised me to require the midwife to give bail for her appearance, and I told my attorney to do so; but, four days after, the following incident took place:

I was walking in the Temple Gardens, when I was accosted by a Savoyard, who gave me a note in which I was informed that somebody in an alley, fifty paces off, wanted to speak to me. "Either a love affair or a challenge," I said to myself, "let's see." I stopped my carriage, which was following me, and went to the place.

I cannot say how surprised I was to see the wretched Castel-Bajac standing before me. "I have only a word to say," said he, when he saw me. "We will not be overheard here. The midwife is quite sure that you are the man who brought a pregnant

lady to her, but she is vexed that you are accused of making away with her. Give her a hundred louis; she will then declare to the court that she has been mistaken, and your trouble will be ended. You need not pay the money till she has made her declaration; we will take your word for it. Come with me and talk it over with Vauversin. I am sure he will persuade you to do as I suggest. I know where to find him, follow me at some distance."

I had listened to him in silence, and I was delighted to see that the rascals were betraying themselves. "Very good," said I to the fellow, "you go on, and I will follow." I went after him to the third floor of a house in the Rue aux Ours, where I found Vauversin the barrister. No sooner had I arrived than he went to business without any prefatory remarks.

"The midwife," he said, "will call on you with a witness apparently with the intention of maintaining to your face that you are her man; *but she won't be able to recognize you.* She will then proceed with the witness to the court, and will declare that she has made a mistake, and the criminal lieutenant will forthwith put an end to the proceedings. You will thus be certain of gaining your case against the lady's mother."

I thought the plan well conceived, and said that they would find me at the Temple any day up to noon.

"But the midwife wants a hundred louis badly."

"You mean that the worthy woman rates her perjury at that price. Well, never mind, I will pay the money, and you may trust to my word; but I can't do so before she has taken oath to her mistake before the court."

"Very good, but you must first give me twenty-five louis to reimburse me for my costs and fees."

"Certainly, if you will give me a formal receipt for the money."

He hesitated at first, but after talking it over the money proved too strong a bait, and he wrote out the receipt and I gave him the twenty-five louis. He thanked me, and said that though Madame X—— C—— V—— was his client, he would let me know confidentially how best to put a stop to the proceedings. I thanked him with as much gratitude as if I had really intended to make use of his services, and I left to write and tell M. de Sartine what had taken place.

Three days afterwards I was told that a man and woman wanted to see me. I went down and asked the woman what she wanted.

"I want to speak to M. Casanova."

"I am he."

"Then I have made a mistake, for which I hope you will forgive me."

Her companion smiled, and they went off.

The same day Madame du Rumain had a letter

from the abbess telling her that her young friend had given birth to a fine boy, who had been sent away to a place where he would be well looked after. She stated that the young lady could not leave the convent for the next six weeks, at the end of which time she could return to her mother with a certificate which would protect her from all annoyance.

Soon after the midwife was put in solitary confinement, Castel-Bajac was sent to The Bicetre, and Vauversin's name was struck off the rolls. The suit instituted against me by Madame X—— C—— V——. went on till her daughter reappeared, but I knew that I had nothing to fear. The girl returned to her mother about the end of August armed with a certificate from the abbess, who said she had been under her protection for four months, during which time she had never left the convent or seen any persons from outside. This was perfectly true, but the abbess added that her only reason for her going back to her family was that she had nothing more to dread from the attentions of M. de la Popelinière, and in this the abbess lied.

Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— profited by the delight of her mother in seeing her again safe and sound, and made her wait on M. de Sartine with the abbess's certificate, stop all proceedings against me, and withdraw all the charges she had made. Her daughter told her that if I liked I might claim damages for libel, and that if she did not wish to injure

her reputation she would say nothing more about what had happened.

The mother wrote me a letter of the most satisfactory character, which I had registered in court, thus putting an end to the prosecution. In my turn I wrote to congratulate her on the recovery of her daughter, but I never set foot in her house again, to avoid any disagreeable scenes with Farsetti.

Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— could not stay any longer in Paris, where her tale was known to everyone, and Farsetti took her to Brussels with her sister Madelaine. Some time after, her mother followed her, and they then went on to Venice, and there in three years' time she became a great lady. Fifteen years afterwards I saw her again, and she was a widow, happy enough apparently, and enjoying a great reputation on account of her rank, wit, and social qualities, but our connection was never renewed.

In four years the reader will hear more of Castel-Bajac. Towards the end of the same year (1759), before I went to Holland, I spent several hundred francs to obtain the release of the midwife.

I lived like a prince, and men might have thought me happy, but I was not. The enormous expenses I incurred, my love of spending money, and magnificent pleasures, warned me, in spite of myself, that there were rocks ahead. My business would have kept me going for a long time, if custom had not been paralyzed by the war; but as it was, I, like every-

body else, experienced the effect of bad times. My warehouse contained four hundred pieces of stuffs with designs on them, but as I could not hope to dispose of them before the peace, and as peace seemed a long way off, I was threatened with ruin.

With this fear I wrote to Esther to get her father to give me the remainder of my money, to send me a sharp clerk, and to join in my speculation. M. d'O—— said that if I would set up in Holland he would become responsible for everything and give me half profits, but I liked Paris too well to agree to so good an offer. I was sorry for it afterwards.

I spent a good deal of money at my private house, but the chief expense of my life, which was unknown to others but which was ruining me, was incurred in connection with the girls who worked in my establishment. With my complexion and my pronounced liking for variety, a score of girls, nearly all of them pretty and seductive, as most Paris girls are, was a reef on which my virtue made shipwreck every day. Curiosity had a good deal to do with it, and they profited by my impatience to take possession by selling their favours dearly. They all followed the example of the first favourite, and everyone claimed in turn an establishment, furniture, money, and jewels; and I knew too little of the value of money to care how much they asked. My fancy never lasted longer than a week, and often waned

in three or four days, and the last comer always appeared the most worthy of my attentions.

As soon as I had made a new choice I saw no more of my old loves, but I continued to provide for them, and that with a good deal of money. Madame d'Urfé, who thought I was rich, gave me no trouble. I made her happy by using my oracle to second the magical ceremonies of which she grew fonder every day, although she never attained her aim. Manon Baletti, however, grieved me sorely by her jealousy and her well-founded reproaches. She could not understand—and I did not wonder at it—how I could put off marrying her if I really loved her. She accused me of deceiving her. Her mother died of consumption in our arms. Silvia had won my true friendship. I looked upon her as a most worthy woman, whose kindness of heart and purity of life deserved the esteem of all. I stayed in the family for three days after her death, sincerely sympathizing with them in their affliction.

A few days afterwards, my friend Tiretta lost his mistress through a grievous illness. Four days before her death, perceiving that she was near her end, she willed to consecrate to God that which man could have no longer, and dismissed her lover with the gift of a valuable jewel and a purse of two hundred louis. Tiretta marched off and came and told me the sad news. I got him a lodging near the Temple, and a month after, approving his idea to

try his fortune in India, I gave him a letter of introduction to M. d'O——, of Amsterdam; and in the course of a week this gentleman got him a post as clerk, and shipped him aboard one of the company's ships which was bound for Batavia. If he had behaved well he might have become a rich man, but he got involved in some conspiracy and had to fly, and afterwards experienced many vicissitudes of fortune. I heard from one of his relations that he was in Bengal in 1788, in good circumstances, but unable to realize his property and so return to his native country. I do not know what became of him eventually.

In the beginning of November an official belonging to the Duc d'Elbeuf's household came to my establishment to buy a wedding dress for his daughter. I was dazzled with her beauty. She chose a fine satin, and her pretty face lighted up when she heard her father say he did not think it was too much; but she looked quite piteous when she heard the clerk tell her father that he would have to buy the whole piece, as they could not cut it. I felt that I must give in, and to avoid making an exception in her favour I beat a hasty retreat into my private room. I wish I had gone out of the house, as I should have saved a good deal of money; but what pleasure should I have also lost! In her despair the charming girl begged the manager to take her to me, and he dared not refuse to do so. She came in; two big tears

falling down her cheeks and dimming the ardour of her gaze.

"Oh, sir!" she began, "you are rich, do you buy the piece and let me have enough for a dress, which will make me happy."

I looked at her father and saw he wore an apologetic air, as if deprecating the boldness of his child.

"I like your simplicity," I said to her, "and since it will make you happy, you shall have the dress."

She ran up to me, threw her arms round my neck and kissed me, while her worthy father was dying with laughter. Her kisses put the last stroke to my bewitchment. After he had paid for the dress, her father said,—

"I am going to get this little madcap married next Sunday; there will be a supper and a ball, and we shall be delighted if you will honour us with your presence. My name is Gilbert. I am comptroller of the Duc d'Elbeuf's household."

I promised to be at the wedding, and the young lady gave a skip of joy which made me think her prettier than ever.

On Sunday I repaired to the house, but I could neither eat nor drink. The fair Mdlle. Gilbert kept me in a kind of enchantment which lasted while I was in company with her friends, for whom I did not care. They were all officials in

noblemen's houses, with their wives and daughters, who all aped the manners of their betters in the most ridiculous way; nobody knew me and I was known to nobody, and I cut a sorry figure amongst them all, for in a company of this sort the wittiest man is the greatest fool. Everybody cracked his joke to the bride, she answered everybody, and people laughed at nothing. Her husband, a thin and melancholy man, with a rather foolish expression, was delighted at his wife's keeping everybody amused. Although I was in love with her, I pitied rather than envied him. I guessed that he had married for monetary considerations, and I knew pretty well what kind of a head-dress his handsome, fiery wife would give her husband, who was plain-featured, and seemed not to be aware of his wife's beauty. I was seized with the desire of asking her some questions, and she gave me the opportunity by coming to sit next to me after a quadrille. She thanked me again for my kindness, and said that the beautiful dress I had supplied had won her many compliments.

"All the same," I said, "I know you are longing to take it off. I know what love is and how impatient it makes one."

"It's very funny that everyone persists in thinking that I am in love, though I saw M. Baret for the first time only a week ago. Before then I was absolutely unconscious of his existence."

"But why are you getting married in such a hurry without waiting till you know him better?"

"Because my father does everything in a hurry."

"I suppose your husband is a very rich man?"

"No, but he may become rich. We are going to open a shop for silk stockings at the corner of the Rue St. Honoré and the Rue des Prouvères, and I hope that you will deal with us, as we would serve you with the best."

"I shall certainly do so—nay, I will be your first customer, if I have to wait at the door."

"You are kind! M. Baret," said she to her husband, who was standing close by, "this gentleman promises to be our first customer."

"The gentleman is very good," said the husband, "and I am sure he will be satisfied, as my stockings are genuine silk."

Next Tuesday at day-break I began to dance attendance at the corner of the Rue des Prouvères, and waited there till the servant came out to take down the shutters. I went in and the girl asked me my business.

"I want to buy some stockings," was my answer.

"Master and mistress are still in bed, so you had better come later on."

"No, I will wait here. Stop a minute," said I, giving her six francs, "go and get me some coffee; I will drink it in the shop."

"I might go and get you some coffee, but I am not so silly as to leave you in the shop by yourself."

"You are afraid I might steal something!"

"Well, one does hear of such things being done, and I don't know you from Adam."

"Very good; but I shall stay here all the same."

Before long Baret came down and scolded the poor girl for not having told him of my presence. "Go and tell my wife to come," said he, as he began opening packets of stockings for me to choose from. He kept stockings, vests, and silk drawers, and I turned one packet over after another, looking at them all and not fixing on anything till I saw his wife coming down as fresh as a rose and as bright as a lily. She smiled at me in the most seductive manner, apologized for the disorder of her dress, and thanked me for keeping my word.

"I never break my word," I said, "especially when such a charming lady is concerned!"

Madame Baret was seventeen, of a moderate height, and an exquisite figure; without being classically beautiful, a Raphael could not wish to depict a more enticing face. Her eyes were large and brilliant. Her drooping eyelids, which gave her so modest and yet so voluptuous an appearance, the ever-smiling mouth, her splendid teeth, the dazzling whiteness of her complexion, the pleasing air with which she listened to what was being said, her silvery voice, the sweetness and sparkling vivacity of her

manner, her lack of conceit, or rather her unconsciousness of the power of her charms—in fine, everything about this masterpiece of nature made me wonder and admire; while she, by chance or vile monetary considerations, was in the power of Baret, who, pale and sickly, thought a good deal more of his stockings than of the treasure marriage had given him—a treasure of which he was all unworthy, since he could not see its beauty nor taste its sweetness.

I chose stockings and vests to the amount of twenty-five louis, and I paid the price without trying to cheapen them. I saw the face of the fair shopwoman light up, and I augured well for my success, though I could not expect to do much while the honeymoon lasted. I told the servant that I would give her six francs if she would bring the packet to my house, and so I left them.

Next Sunday Baret came himself with my purchases. I gave him six francs to hand over to his servant, but he hinted that he was not too proud to keep them himself. I was disgusted at this petty greed, and at his meanness in depriving his maid of the six francs after having made a good profit in what he had sold me; but I wanted to stand well with him, and I was not sorry to find so simple a way of throwing dust into his eyes. So while I resolved that the servant should not be a loser I gave the husband a good reception that I might the better mould him to my purpose. I had breakfast brought

to him, asking why he had not brought his wife. "She wanted me to take her," said he, "but I was afraid you might be offended."

"Not at all, I should have been delighted. I think your wife a charming woman."

"You are very kind to say so; but she's young, she's young."

"I don't think that's any objection; and if she cares for the walk, bring her with you another time." He said he should be very pleased to do so.

When I passed by the shop in my carriage I blew kisses to her with my hand, but I did not stop as I did not want any more stockings. Indeed, I should have been bored with the crowd of fops with which the shop was always full. She began to be a topic of conversation in the town; the Palais Royal was full of her; and I was glad to hear that she kept to herself as if she had richer prey in view. That told me that no one possessed her so far, and I hoped that I might be the prey myself; I was quite willing to be captured.

Some days after, she saw my carriage coming, and beckoned to me as I passed. I got out, and her husband with many apologies told me that he wanted me to be the first to see a new fashion in breeches he had just got in. The breeches were parti-coloured, and no man of fashion would be seen without them. They were odd-looking things, but became a well-made young man. As they had to fit exactly, I told

him to measure me for six pairs, offering to pay in advance. "We have them in all sizes," said he, "go up to my wife's room and try some on."

It was a good opportunity and I accepted, especially when I heard him tell his wife to go and help me. I went upstairs, she following, and I began to undress, apologizing for doing so before her.

"I will fancy I am your valet," said she, "and I will help you."

I did not make any difficulties, and after taking off my shoes I gave her my breeches, taking care, however, to keep on my drawers, lest her modesty should receive too severe a shock. This done she took a pair of breeches, drew them on me, took them off, and tried on others, and all this without any impropriety on either side; for I had determined to behave with discretion till the opportunity came to be indiscreet. She decided that four pairs fitted me admirably, and, not wishing to contradict her, I gave her the sixteen louis she asked, and told her I should be delighted if she would bring them herself at any time when she was at leisure. She came downstairs quite proud of her knowledge of business, and Baret said that next Sunday he and his wife would have the honour of bringing me my purchase.

"I shall be charmed, M. Baret," said I, "especially if you will stay to dinner."

He answered that having an important engagement for two o'clock he could only accept on the con-

dition that I would let him go at that time, and he would return at about five to fetch his wife. I found the plan vastly to my taste, but I knew how to conceal my joy; and I quietly said that though I should lose the pleasure of his society, he was free to go when he liked, especially as I had not to go out myself before six.

I looked forward to the Sunday, and the tradesman and his wife did not fail me. As soon as they arrived, I told my servant to say "Not at home" for the rest of the day, and as I was impatient to know what would happen in the afternoon I had dinner served at an early hour. The dishes were exquisite, and the wines delicious. The good man ate much and drank deeply, indeed to such an extent that in common politeness I was obliged to remind him that he had an important appointment at two. His wits being sharpened with champagne, the happy thought occurred to him to tell his wife to go home by herself, if he were kept later than five; and I hastened to add that I would take her home myself in my carriage. He thanked me, and I soothed his uneasiness about being punctual to his appointment by telling him that a coach was waiting, and that the fare had been paid. He went off, and I found myself alone with my jewel, whom I was certain of possessing till six o'clock.

As soon as I heard the hall door shut on the kind husband, I said to his wife,—

"You are to be congratulated on having such a kind husband; with a man like that your happiness is assured."

"It is easy to say happiness, but enjoying it is a different thing. My husband's health is so delicate that I can only consider myself as his nurse; and then he contracted heavy debts to set up in business which oblige us to observe the strictest economy. We came here on foot to save the twenty-four sous. We could live on the profits of the business, if there were no debts, but as it is everything goes to pay the interest, and our sales are not large enough to cover everything."

"But you have plenty of customers, for whenever I pass I see the shop full of people."

"These customers you see are idlers, crackers of bad jokes, and profligates, who come and make my head ache with their jests. They have not a penny to bless themselves with, and we dare not let them out of our sight for fear of their hands wandering. If we had cared to give them credit, our shop would have been emptied long ago. I am rude to them, in the hopes that they may leave me alone, but it's of no use. Their impudence is astonishing. When my husband is in I retreat to my room, but he is often away, and then I am obliged to put up with them. And the scarcity of money prevents us from doing much business, but we are obliged to pay our workmen all the same. As far as I can see, we shall be

obliged to dismiss them, as we shall soon have to meet several bills. Next Saturday we have got to pay six hundred francs, and we have only got two hundred."

"I am surprised at your having all this worry in these early days of your marriage. I suppose your father knew about your husband's circumstances; how about your dowry?"

"My dowry of six thousand francs has served, most of it, to stock the shop and to pay our debts. We have goods which would pay our debts three times over; but in bad times capital sunk is capital dead."

"I am sorry to hear all this, as if peace is not made your situation will become worse, for as you go on your needs will become greater."

"Yes, for when my husband is better we may have children."

"What! Do you mean to say his health prevents him from making you a mother? I can't believe it."

"I don't see how I can be a mother who am still a maid; not that I care much about the matter."

"I shouldn't have believed it! How can a man not in the agony of death feel ill beside you? He must be dead."

"Well, he is not exactly dead, but he doesn't shew many signs of life."

This piece of wit made me laugh, and under cover of my applause I embraced her without experiencing much resistance. The first kiss was like an

electric spark; it fired my imagination and I increased my attentions till she became as submissive as a lamb.

"I will help you, dearest, to meet the bill on Saturday;" and so saying I drew her gently into a closet where a soft divan formed a suitable altar for the completion of an amorous sacrifice.

I was enchanted to find her submissive to my caresses and my inquisitiveness, but she surprised me greatly when, as I placed myself in readiness for the consummation of the act, and was already in the proper posture between the two columns, she moved in such a way as to hinder my advance. I thought at first that it was only one of those devices intended to make the final victory more sweet by putting difficulties in the way; but, finding that her resistance was genuine, I exclaimed,—

"How was I to expect a refusal like this at a moment when I thought I saw my ardours reflected in your eyes?"

"Your eyes did not deceive you; but what would my husband say if he found me otherwise than as God has made me?"

"He can't have left you untouched!"

"He really has done so. You can see for yourself if you like. Can I, then, give to you what appertains to the genius of the marriage-bed."

"You are right, my angel; this fruit must be kept for a mouth unworthy to taste it. I pity and

adore you. Come to my arms, abandon yourself to my love, and fear nothing. The fruit shall not be damaged; I will but taste the outer surface and leave no trace behind."

We passed three hours in trifling together in a manner calculated to inflame our passions despite the libations which we now and again poured forth. I was consoled by her swearing to be mine as soon as Baret had good grounds for thinking that she was his, and, after taking her on the Boulevards, I left her at her door, with a pleasant of twenty-five louis.

I was in love with her as I had never been before, and I passed the shop three or four times a day, going round and round, to the wrath of my coachman, who got sick of telling me that I was ruining my horses. I was happy to see her watch for the moment that I passed, and waft me a kiss by putting her pretty fingers to her mouth.

We had agreed that she should not make me a sign to leave my coach till her husband had forced a passage. At last this day, so ardently desired and so long waited for, arrived. The sign was given, and I stopped the coach and she came out and, standing on the step, told me to go and wait for her at the church door of St. Germain l'Auxerrois.

I was curious to know what the results would be, and had not been at the place appointed more than a quarter of an hour when she came towards

me, her head muffled in a hood. She got into the carriage and, saying that she wanted to make some purchases, begged me to take her to the shops.

I had business of my own, and pressing business too, but who can refuse the Beloved Object anything? I told the coachman to drive to the Place Dauphine, and I prepared to loosen my purse-strings, as I had a feeling she was going to treat me as a friend. In point of fact she left few shops unvisited, going from jewels to pretty trifles and toys of different kinds, and from these to dresses of the latest fashion, which they displayed before her, addressing her as *princess,* and saying that this would become her admirably. She looked at me, and said it must be confessed that it was very pretty and that she would like it if it were not so dear. I was a willing dupe, and assured her that if she liked it it could not be too dear, and that I would pay.

While my sweetheart was thus choosing one trifle after another my ill-luck brought about an incident which placed me in a fearful situation four years afterwards. The chain of events is endless.

I perceived at my left hand a pretty girl of twelve or thirteen, with an old and ugly woman who was disparaging a pair of ear-rings which the girl had in her hands, and on which she had evidently set her heart: she looked sad at not being able to buy them. I heard her say to the old woman that they

would make her happy, but she snatched them from the girl's hands and told her to come away.

"I can let you have a cheaper pair and almost as fine," said the shopwoman, but the young lady said she did not care about it, and was getting ready to go, making a profound reverence to my *princess* Baret.

She, no doubt flattered by this sign of respect went up to her, called her *little queen,* told her she was as fair as a May morning, and asked the old woman her name.

"She is Mdlle. de Boulainvilier, my nicce."

"How can you be so hard-hearted," said I to the aunt, "as to refuse your charming niece a toy which would make her happy? Allow me to make her a present of them."

So saying I put the ear-rings in the girl's hands, while she blushed and looked at her aunt as if to ask her permission.

"You may have the ear-rings," said she, "as this gentleman has been kind enough to give you such a present, and you should give him a kiss by way of thanks."

"The ear-rings," said the shopwoman, "will be only three louis."

Hereupon the affair took a comic turn; the old woman got into a rage and said,—

"How can you be such a cheat? You told me they were only two louis."

"Nay, madam, I asked three."

"That's a lie, and I shall not allow you to rob this gentleman. Niece, put those ear-rings down; let the shopwoman keep them."

So far all was well enough; but the old aunt spoilt everything by saying that if I liked to give her niece the three louis she could get her a pair twice as good at another shop. It was all the same to me, so I smilingly put the three louis in front of the young lady, who still had the ear-rings in her hands. The shopwoman, who was on the look-out, pocketed the money, saying that the bargain was made, that the three louis belonged to her and the ear-rings to the young lady.

"You are a cheat," cried out the enraged old woman.

"And you are an old b——d," answered the old woman, "I know you well." A crowd began to gather in front of the shop, hearing the cries of the two harpies. Foreseeing a good deal of unpleasantness, I took the aunt by the arm and led her gently away. The niece, who was quite content with the ear-rings, and did not care whether they cost three louis or two, followed her. We shall hear of them again in due course.

My dear Baret having made me waste a score of louis, which her poor husband would have regretted much more than myself, we got into the carriage again, and I took her to the church door from

which we had started. On the way she told me she was coming to stop a few days with me at Little Poland, and that it was her husband who would ask me for the invitation.

"When will he do that?"

"To-morrow, if you go by the shop. Come and buy some stockings; I shall have a bad headache, and Baret will speak to you."

It may be imagined that I took care to call the next day, and as I did not see his wife in the shop I asked in a friendly way after her health.

"She is ill in bed," he replied; "she wants a little country air."

"If you have not fixed for any place, I shall be happy to put you up at Little Poland."

He replied by a smile of delight.

"I will go and urge her to come myself; in the meanwhile, M. Baret, will you pack me up a dozen pairs of stockings?"

I went upstairs and found the invalid in bed, and laughing in spite of her imaginary headache. "The business is done," said I, "you will soon hear of it." As I had said, the husband came upstairs with my stockings and told her that I had been good enough to give her a room in my house. The crafty little creature thanked me, assuring her husband that the fresh air would soon cure her.

"You shall be well looked after," said I, "but you must excuse me if I do not keep you company

—I have to attend to my business. M. Baret will be able to come and sleep with you every night, and start early enough in the morning to be in time for the opening of his shop."

After many compliments had been interchanged, Baret decided on having his sister to stay in the house while his wife was away, and as I took leave I said that I should give orders for their reception that very evening, in case I was out when they came.

Next day I stayed out till after midnight, and the cook told me that the wedded couple had made a good supper and had gone to bed. I warned her that I should be dining at home every day, and that I should not see my company.

The following day I was up betimes, and on enquiring if the husband had risen I learnt that he had got up at day-break and would not be back till supper-time. The wife was still asleep. I thought with reason she was not asleep for me, and I went to pay her my first visit. In point of fact she was awake, and I took a foretaste of greater joys by a thousand kisses, which she returned with interest. We jested at the expense of the worthy man who had trusted me with a jewel of which I was about to make such good use, and we congratulated each other on the prospects of a week's mutual pleasures.

"Come, my dear," said I, "get up and put on a few clothes and we will take breakfast in my room."

She did not make an elaborate toilette; a cotton

dressing gown, a pretty lace cap, a lawn kerchief, that was all, but how the simple dress was lighted by the roses of her cheeks! We were quick over our breakfast, we were in a hurry, and when we had done I shut the door and we gave ourselves over to the enjoyment of our bliss.

Surprised to find her in the same condition in which I had left her, I told her I had hoped . . . but she, without giving me time to finish the phrase, said,—

"My jewel, Baret thinks, or pretends to think, that he has done his duty as a husband; but he is no hand at the business, and I am disposed to put myself in your hands, and then there will be no doubt of my condition."

"We shall thus, my sweet, be doing him a service, and the service shall be well done."

As I said these words I was on the threshold of the temple, and I opened the door in a manner that overthrew all obstacles. A little scream and then several sighs announced the completion of the sacrifice, and, to tell the truth, the altar of love was covered with the blood of the victim. After the necessary ablutions the priest once more began his pious work, while the victim growing bolder so provoked his rage that it was not till the fourth mactation that we rested and put off our joust to another season. We swore a thousand times to love each other and to remain constant, and we may possibly

have been sincere, as we were in our ecstasy of pleasure.

We only separated to dress; then after taking a turn in the garden we dined together, sure that in a sumptuous repast, washed down by the choicest wines, we should find strength to reanimate our desires and to lull them to sleep in bliss.

At dessert, as I was pouring champagne into her glass, I asked her how with such a fiery temperament she had managed to preserve her virtue?

"Cupid," said I, "might have gathered the fruit that Hymen could not taste. You are seventeen, and the pear has been ripe for two years at least."

"Very true, but I have never had a lover."

"Never?"

"I have been courted, but to no effect. My heart was ever silent. Possibly my father thought otherwise when I begged him, a month ago, to get me married soon."

"Very likely, but as you were not in love, why were you in such a hurry?"

"I knew that the Duc d'Elbeuf would soon be coming to town, and that if he found me still single he would oblige me to become the wife of a man I detest, who would have me at any price."

"Who is this man for whom you have such an aversion?"

"He is one of the duke's pets, a monster who sleeps with his master."

"Really! I did not know the duke had such tastes."

"Oh yes; he is eighty-four, and he thinks himself a woman; he says he must have a husband."

"That is very funny. And is this aspirant to your hand a handsome man?"

"I think him horrible; but everybody else thinks he is a fine man."

The charming Baret spent a week with me, and each day we renewed the combat in which we were always conquerors and always conquered. I have seen few women as pretty and seductive, and none whose skin was more exquisitely soft and fair. Her breath was aromatic, and this made her kisses most sweet. Her neck was exquisitely shaped, and the two globes, tipped with coral, were as hard as marble. The exquisite curves of her figure would have defied the skill of the ablest painter. I experienced an ineffable joy in contemplating her, and in the midst of my happiness I called myself unhappy because I could not satisfy all the desires which her charms aroused in me. The frieze which crowned her columns was composed of links of pale gold of the utmost fineness, and my fingers strove in vain to give them another direction to that which nature had given them. She could easily have been taught those lively yet graceful movements which double the pleasure; nature had done her part in that direction,

and I do not think a more expert mistress in the art of love could be found.

Each of us looked forward to the day of her departure with equal grief, and our only consolation lay in the hope of meeting again, and often. Three days after she went away, I went to see her, more in love than ever, and I gave her two notes of five thousand francs apiece. Her husband might have his suspicions, but he was too happy at being enabled to pay his debts and to keep his shop open to say anything unpleasant. Many husbands besides himself think themselves lucky to have such productive wives.

In the beginning of November I sold shares for fifty thousand francs to a man named Garnier, living in the Rue du Mail, giving up to him a third part of the materials in my warehouse, and accepting a manager chosen by him and paid by the company. Three days after signing the deed I received the money; but in the night the doctor, my warehouseman, emptied the till and absconded. I have always thought that this robbery could not have been effected without the connivance of the painter. This loss was a serious blow to me, as my affairs were getting into an embroiled condition; and, for a finishing touch to my misfortunes, Garnier had me served with a summons to repay him the fifty thousand francs. My answer was that I was not liable, that his manager had been appointed, the agreement and sale of the shares was valid, and that he being one of the company

would have to share in the loss. As he persisted in his claim, I was advised to go to law, but Garnier declared the agreement null and void, accusing me in an indirect manner of having appropriated the money which I had said was stolen. I would willingly have given him a good thrashing, but he was an old man, and that course would not have mended matters, so I kept my temper. The merchant who had given surety for the doctor was not to be found; he had become bankrupt. Garnier had all my stock seized, and sequestrated my horses, carriages, and all my private property.

While these troubles were harassing me, I dismissed all my work-girls, who had always been a great expense, and replaced them with workmen and some of my servants. The painter still retained his position, which was an assured one, as he always paid himself out of the sales.

My attorney was an honest man—a rare bird amongst lawyers—but my counsel, who kept telling me that the case would soon be decided, was a rascal. While the decision was pending, Garnier served me with a writ to pay the sum claimed. I took it to my counsel, who promised to appeal the same day, which he did not do, while he appropriated to his own use the money assigned by me for the costs of an action which, if there had been justice in France, I should certainly have gained. Two other summonses were issued against me, and before I knew what was going

on a warrant was issued for my arrest. I was seized at eight o'clock in the morning, as I was driving along the Rue St. Denis. The sergeant of police sat beside me, a second got up beside the coachman, and a third stationed himself at the back of the coach, and in this state we drove to Fort l'Evêque.

As soon as the police had handed me over to the gaoler, he informed me that by payment of the fifty thousand francs, or by giving good bail, I might instantly regain my freedom.

"For the moment," said I, "I can neither command money nor bail."

"Very good, then you will stay in prison."

The gaoler took me to a decent-looking room, and I told him I had only been served with one writ.

"Very likely," answered he, "it often happens like that; but it is rather difficult to prove."

"Bring me writing materials, and have a trusty messenger at my disposal."

I wrote to my counsel, my attorney, to Madame d'Urfé, and to all my friends, including my brother, who was just married. The attorney called immediately, but the barrister contented himself with writing to the effect that as he had put in an appeal my seizure was illegal, and that damages might be recovered. He ended by begging me to give him a free hand, and to have patience for a few days.

Manon Baletti sent her brother with her diamond ear-rings. Madame du Rumain dispatched her

barrister—a man of rare honesty—to me, and wrote a friendly note in which she said that if I wanted five hundred louis I should have them to-morrow. My brother neither wrote nor came to see me. As to dear Madame d'Urfé she sent to say that she would expect me at dinner. I thought she had gone mad, as I could not think she was making fun of me.

At eleven o'clock my room was full of people. Poor Baret had come weeping, and offering me all his shop held. I was touched by the worthy man's kindness. At last I was told that a lady in a coach wanted to see me. I waited, but nobody came. In my impatience I called the turnkey, who told me that, after questioning the clerk of the prison, she had gone away again. From the description I was given I had no difficulty in identifying the lady with Madame d'Urfé.

To find myself deprived of my liberty was a disagreeable shock to me. I thought of The Leads, and though my present situation was not to be compared with that, I cursed my fate as I foresaw that my imprisonment would damage my reputation. I had thirty thousand francs in hard cash and jewels to more than double that amount, but I could not decide on making such a sacrifice, in spite of the advice given by Madame du Rumain's barrister, who would have me got out of prison at any cost.

"All you have to do," said the barrister, "is to deposit half the sum demanded which I will give to

the clerk of the court, and in a short time I can promise a decision in your favour and the restoration of your money."

We were discussing the matter, when the gaoler entered, and said, very politely,—

"Sir, you are a free man again, and a lady is waiting for you at the door in her carriage."

I called Le Duc, my man, and told him to go and see who the lady was. He returned with the information that it was Madame d'Urfé. I made my bow to everybody, and after four very disagreeable hours of imprisonment, I found myself free again and sitting in a splendid coach.

Madame d'Urfé received me with dignified kindness, and a judge who was in the carriage apologized for his country, where strangers were exposed to such insults. I thanked Madame d'Urfé in a few words, telling her that I was glad to become her debtor, but that it was Garnier who benefited by her generosity. She replied with a pleasant smile that she was not so sure of that, and that we would talk it over at dinner. She wanted me to go and walk in the Tuileries and the Palais Royal, to convince people that the report of my imprisonment had been false. I thought the advice excellent, and as I set out I promised to be with her at two o'clock.

After shewing myself at the two principal walks of Paris, amusing myself by the astonishment depicted on certain faces well known to me, I went

and returned the ear-rings to my dear Manon, who gave an astonished but a happy cry when she saw me. I thanked her tenderly for the proof she had given me of her attachment, and said that I had been arrested by a plot for which I would make the plotters pay dear. After promising to spend the evening with them I went to Madame d'Urfé's.

This good lady, whose foible is well known to my readers, made me laugh when she said that her genius had told her that I had got myself arrested to be talked about, for reasons which were known only to myself.

"As soon as I was informed of your arrest," said she, "I went to the Fort l'Evêque, and on learning from the clerk what the affair was about, I deposited bonds to bail you out. If you are not in a position to have justice done you, Garnier will have to reckon with me before he takes the money I have deposited. But your first step should be to commence a criminal prosecution against your counsel, who has not only failed to put in your appeal but has robbed and deceived you."

I left her in the evening, assuring her that in a few days her bail should be returned to her; and went to the French and Italian plays in succession, taking care to render myself conspicuous that my reappearance might be complete. Afterwards I went to sup with Manon Baletti, who was too happy to have had an opportunity of shewing her affection for

me; and her joy was full when I told her that I was going to give up business, for she thought that my seraglio was the only obstacle to my marriage with her.

The next day was passed with Madame du Rumain. I felt that my obligations to her were great, while she, in the goodness of her heart, was persuaded that she could make no adequate return to me for the oracles with which I furnished her, and by following which she was safely guided through the perplexities of life. I cannot understand how she, whose wit was keen, and whose judgment on other subjects was of the soundest kind, could be liable to such folly. I was sorry when I reflected that I could not undeceive her, and glad when I reflected that to this deceit of mine the kindness she had shewn me was chiefly due.

My imprisonment disgusted me with Paris, and made me conceive a hatred of the law, which I feel now. I found myself entangled in a double maze of knavery—Garnier was my foe, and so was my own counsel. Every time I went to plead, to spend my money amongst lawyers, and to waste the time better given to pleasure, I felt as if I was going to execution. In this perturbed kind of life, so contrary to my inclinations, I resolved to set to work in earnest to make my fortune, so that I might become independent and free to enjoy life according to my tastes. I decided in the first place that I would cut

myself free of all that bound me to Paris, make a second journey into Holland to replenish my purse, and invest my money in a yearly income for two lives, and from thenceforth live free from care. The two lives were those of my wife and myself; my wife would be Manon Baletti, and when I told her my plans she would have thought them delightful if I had begun by marrying her.

The first thing I did was to give up Little Poland. I then drew the twenty-four thousand francs which were my surety for keeping a lottery office in the Rue St. Denis. Thus I got rid of my ridiculous office of lottery receiver, and after getting my clerk married I handed over the office to him; in short, I made his fortune. A friend of his wife's was his surety; such things often happen.

I did not like to leave Madame d'Urfé involved in a troublesome suit with Garnier, so I went to Versailles to see the Abbé de la Ville, a great friend of his, and begged him to induce Garnier to make a composition.

The abbé saw that his friend was in the wrong, and so was all the more willing to help me; and a few days afterwards he wrote to me to go and see him, assuring me that I should find him inclined to arrange matters in a friendly manner.

Garnier was at Ruelle, where he had a house which cost him four hundred thousand francs—a fine estate for a man who had made his money as an

army contractor during the last war. He was rich, but he was so unfortunate as to be still fond of women at the age of seventy, while his impotence debarred him from the proper enjoyment of their society. I found him in company with three young ladies, all of whom were pretty, and (as I heard afterwards) of good families; but they were poor, and their necessities forced them to submit to a disgusting intercourse with the old profligate. I stayed to dinner and admired the propriety and modesty of their behaviour in spite of the humiliation which accompanies poverty. After dinner, Garnier went to sleep, and left me to entertain these girls whom I would willingly have rescued from their unfortunate situation if I had been able. After Garnier woke, we went into his study to talk over our business.

At first he maintained his claim tenaciously, and seemed unwilling to yield an inch; but when I told him that I was leaving Paris in a few days, he saw that as he could not keep me, Madame d'Urfé might take the suit over and carry it on to infinity, and that he might lose it at last. That made him think it over, and he asked me to stay in his house for the night. The next day, after breakfast, he said,—

"I have made up my mind: I will have twenty-five thousand francs, or keep the matter before the courts till my dying day."

I answered that he would find the sum in the hands of Madame d'Urfé's solicitor, and that he could

receive it as soon as he had given replevy on the bail at the Fort l'Evêque.

I could not persuade Madame d'Urfé that I had acted wisely in coming to an arrangement till I had told her that my genius had commanded me not to leave Paris before my affairs were settled, so that no one might be able to accuse me of having gone away to avoid creditors whose claims I could not satisfy.

Three or four days afterwards I went to take leave of M. de Choiseul, who promised to instruct M. d'Afri to aid me in negotiating a loan at five per cent. either with the States-General or a private company.

"You can tell everyone," said he, "that peace is certain to be made in the course of the winter, and I will take care that you shall have what is due to you on your return to France."

M. de Choiseul deceived me, for he knew very well that peace would not be made; but I had no definite project, and I repented of having given M. de Boulogne my confidence, and also of having done anything for the Government, the reward of which was not immediate and certain.

I sold my horses, my carriages, my furniture; I went bail for my brother who had contracted debts he was sure of paying, as he had several pictures on the easel which he had been ordered to paint by some of his rich and noble patrons. I took leave of Manon, whom I left in floods of tears, though I swore with

the utmost sincerity to come back soon and marry her.

At last all my preparations were finished, and I left Paris with a hundred thousand francs in bills of exchange and jewels to the same amount. I was alone in my post-chaise, Le Duc preceding me on horseback, which the rascal preferred to being shut up in a carriage.

This Le Duc of mine was a Spaniard, aged eighteen, a sharp fellow, whom I valued highly, especially because he did my hair better than anyone else. I never refused him a pleasure which a little money would buy. Besides him I had a good Swiss servant, who served as my courier.

It was the 1st of December, 1759, and the air was frosty, but I was fortified against the inclemency of the season. I was able to read comfortably, and I took Helvetius's "Esprit," which I had never had time to read before. After perusing it I was equally astonished at the sensation it created and at the stupidity of the High Court which condemned it. Of course that exalted body was largely influenced by the king and the clergy, and between them all no effort was spared to ruin Helvetius, a good-hearted man with more wit than his book. I saw nothing novel either in the historical part relating to the morals of nations (in which Helvetius dismisses us as triflers), or in the position that morality is dependent on the reason. All that he says has been said over

and over again, and Blaise Pascal went much farther, but he wrote more skilfully and better in every way than Helvetius, who, wishing to remain in France, was obliged to retract. He preferred a quiet life to his honour and his philosophy. His wife had a nobler soul than he, as she wanted to sell all they had, and to take refuge in Holland rather than submit to the shame of a recantation. Perhaps Helvetius would have followed the noble advice of his wife if he had foreseen that this monstrous recantation would make his book into a fraud; for he had to confess that he had written without due reflection, that he was more in jest than earnest, and that his arguments were mere sophisms. But many men of keen intellects had not waited for him to recant before exposing this wretched system of his. And admitting that whatever man does is done for his own interest, does it follow that gratitude is a folly, and virtue and vice identical? Are a villain and a man of honour to be weighed in the same balance? If such a dreadful system were not absurd, virtue would be mere hypocrisy; and if by any possibility it were true, it ought to be proscribed by general consent, since it would lead to general ruin and corruption.

It might have been proved to Helvetius that the propositions that the first motive is always self-interest, and that we should always consult our own interest first, are fallacious. It is a strange thing that so virtuous a man would not admit the exist-

ence of virtue. It is an amusing suggestion that he only published his book out of modesty, but that would have contradicted his own system. But if it were so, was it well done to render himself contemptible to escape the imputation of pride? Modesty is only a virtue when it is natural; if it is put on, or merely the result of training, it is detestable. The great d'Alembert was the most truly modest man I have ever seen.

When I got to Brussels, where I spent two days, I went to the "Hotel de l'Imperatrice," and chance sent Mdlle. X—— C—— V—— and Farsetti in my way, but I pretended not to see them. From Brussels I went straight to the Hague, and got out at the "Prince of Orange." On my asking the host who sat down at his table, he told me his company consisted of general officers of the Hanoverian army, some English ladies, and a Prince Piccolomini and his wife; and this made me make up my mind to join this illustrious assemblage.

I was unknown to all, and keeping my eyes about me I gave my chief attention to the observation of the supposed Italian princess, who was pretty enough, and more especially of her husband whom I seemed to recognize. In the course of conversation I heard some talk of the celebrated St. Germain, and it seemed that he was stopping in the same hotel.

I had returned to my room, and was thinking

of going to bed, when Prince Piccolomini entered, and embraced me as an old friend.

"A look in your face," said he, "tells me that the recognition has been mutual. I knew you directly in spite of the sixteen years that have passed since we saw each other at Vicenza. Tomorrow you can tell everybody that we are friends, and that though I am not a prince I am really a count; here is my passport from the King of Naples, pray read it."

During this rapid monologue I could not get in a single word, and on attentively scanning his features I could only recollect that I had seen him before, but when or where or how I knew not. I opened the passport and read the name of Ruggero di Rocco, Count Piccolomini. That was enough; I remembered an individual of that name who was a fencing-master in Vicenza, and on looking at him again his aspect, though much changed left no doubt as to the identity of the swordsman and the count.

"I congratulate you," said I, "on your change of employment, your new business is doubtless much better than the old."

"I taught fencing," he replied, "to save myself from dying of hunger, for my father was so hard a man that he would not give me the wherewithal to live, and I disguised my name so as not to disgrace it. On my father's death I succeeded to the property, and at Rome I married the lady you have seen."

"You had good taste, for she's a pretty woman."

"She is generally thought so, and it was a love match on my side."

He ended by asking me to come and see him in his room the next day, after dinner, telling me that I should find good company and a bank at faro, which he kept himself. He added, without ceremony, that if I liked we could go half shares, and that I should find it profitable. I thanked him, and promised to pay him a visit.

I went abroad at an early hour next morning, and after having spent some time with the Jew, Boaz, and having given a polite refusal to his offer of a bed, I went to pay my respects to M. d'Afri, who since the death of the Princess of Orange, the Regent of the Low Countries, was generally known as His Most Christian Majesty's ambassador. He gave me an excellent reception, but he said that if I had returned to Holland hoping to do business on behalf of the Government I should waste my time, since the action of the comptroller-general had lowered the credit of the nation, which was thought to be on the verge of bankruptcy.

"This M. Silhouette," said he, "has served the king very badly. It is all very well to say that payments are only suspended for a year, but it is not believed."

He then asked me if I knew a certain Comte de St. Germain, who had lately arrived at the Hague.

"He has not called on me," said the ambassador, "though he says he is commissioned by the king to negotiate a loan of a hundred millions. When I am asked about him, I am obliged to say that I know nothing about him, for fear of compromising myself. Such a reply, as you can understand, is not likely to increase his chance of success, but that is his fault and not mine. Why has he not brought me a letter from the Duc de Choiseul or the Marquise de Pompadour? I take him to be an impostor, but I shall know something more about him in the course of ten days."

I told him, in my turn, all I knew of this truly eccentric individual. He was not a little surprised to hear that the king had given him an apartment at Chambord, but when I told him that the count professed to be able to make diamonds he laughed and said that in that case he would no doubt make the hundred millions. Just as I was leaving, M. d'Afri asked me to dine with him on the following day.

On returning to the hotel I called on the Comte de St. Germain.

"You have anticipated me," said he, on seeing me enter, "I intended to have called on you. I suppose, my dear Casanova, that you have come to try what you can do for our Court, but you will find your task a difficult one, as the Exchange is highly offended at the late doings of that fool Silhouette. All the same I hope I shall be able to get my hun-

dred millions. I have passed my word to my friend, Louis XV. (I may call him so), and I can't disappoint him; the business will be done in the next three or four weeks."

"I should think M. d'Afri might assist you."

"I do not require his assistance. Probably I shall not even call upon him, as he might say he helped me. No, I shall have all the trouble, and I mean to have all the glory, too."

"I presume you will be going to Court, where the Duke of Brunswick may be of service to you?"

"Why should I go to Court? As for the Duke of Brunswick, I do not care to know him. All I have got to do is to go to Amsterdam, where my credit is sufficiently good for anything. I am fond of the King of France; there's not a better man in the kingdom."

"Well, come and dine at the high table, the company is of the best and will please you."

"You know I never eat; moreover, I never sit down at a table where I may meet persons who are unknown to me."

"Then, my lord, farewell; we shall see each other again at Amsterdam."

I went down to the dining-room, where, while dinner was being served, I conversed with some officers. They asked me if I knew Prince Piccolomini, to which I answered that he was not a prince but a

count, and that it was many years since I had seen him.

When the count and his fair wife (who only spoke Italian) came down, I shewed them some polite attentions, and we then sat down to dinner.

CHAPTER X

PORTRAIT OF THE PRETENDED COUNTESS PICCOLOMINI —QUARREL AND DUEL—ESTHER AND HER FATHER, M. D'O.—ESTHER STILL TAKEN WITH THE CABALA —PICCOLOMINI FORGES A BILL OF EXCHANGE: RESULTS—I AM FLEECED, AND IN DANGER OF BEING ASSASSINATED—DEBAUCH WITH THE TWO PADUAN GIRLS—I REVEAL A GREAT SECRET TO ESTHER—I BAFFLE THE RASCALLY ST. GERMAIN: HIS FLIGHT—MANON BALETTI PROVES FAITHLESS TO ME: HER LETTER ANNOUNCING HER MARRIAGE: MY DESPAIR —ESTHER SPENDS A DAY WITH ME—MY PORTRAIT AND MY LETTERS TO MANON GET INTO ESTHER'S HANDS—I PASS A DAY WITH HER—WE TALK OF MARRYING EACH OTHER

The so-called Countess Piccolomini was a fine example of the adventuress. She was young, tall, well-made, had eyes full of fire, and skin of a dazzling whiteness; not, however, that natural whiteness which delights those who know the value of a satin skin and rose petals, but rather that artificial fairness which is commonly to be seen at Rome on the faces of courtezans, and which disgusts those who know

how it is produced. She had also splendid teeth, glorious hair as black as jet, and arched eyelids like ebony. To these advantages she added attractive manners, and there was something intelligent about the way she spoke; but through all I saw the adventuress peeping out, which made me detest her.

As she did not speak anything but Italian the countess had to play the part of a mute at table, except where an English officer named Walpole was concerned, who, finding her to his taste, set himself to amuse her. I felt friendly disposed towards this Englishman, though my feelings were certainly not the result of sympathy. If I had been blind or deaf Sir James Walpole would have been totally indifferent to me, as what I felt for him was the result of my observation.

Although I did not care for the countess, for all that I went up to her room after dinner with the greater part of the guests. The count arranged a game of whist, and Walpole played at primero with the countess, who cheated him in a masterly manner; but though he saw it he laughed and paid, because it suited his purpose to do so. When he had lost fifty louis he called quarter, and the countess asked him to take her to the theatre. This was what the good-natured Englishman wanted; and he and the countess went off, leaving the husband playing whist.

I, too, went to the play, and as chance would

have it my neighbour in the pit was Count Tot, brother to the count famous for his stay in Constantinople.

We had some conversation together, and he told me he had been obliged to leave France on account of a duel which he had had with a man who had jested with him for not being present at the battle of Minden, saying that he had absented himself in view of the battle. The count had proved his courage with the sword on the other's body—a rough kind of argument which was fashionable then as now. He told me he had no money, and I immediately put my purse at his service; but, as the saying goes, a kindness is never thrown away, and five years later he did the same by me at St. Petersburg. Between the acts he happened to notice the Countess Piccolomini, and asked me if I knew her husband.

"I know him very slightly," I answered, "but we happen to be staying at the same hotel."

"He's a regular black sheep," said the count, "and his wife's no better than he."

It seemed that they had already won a reputation in the town.

After the play I went back to the hotel by myself, and the head-waiter told me that Piccolomini had set out hot-foot with his servant, his only luggage being a light portmanteau. He did not know the reason of this sudden departure, but a minute afterwards the countess came in, and her

maid having whispered something to her she told me that the count had gone away because he had fought a duel but that often happened. She asked me to sup with her and Walpole, and her appetite did not seem to suffer from the absence of her spouse.

Just as we were finishing supper, an Englishman, who had been of the whist party, came up and told Walpole that the Italian had been caught cheating and had given the lie to their fellow Englishman, who had detected him, and that they had gone out together. An hour afterwards the Englishman returned with two wounds, one on the fore-arm and one on the shoulder. It was a trifling affair altogether.

Next day, after I had had dinner with the Comte d'Afri, I found a letter from Piccolomini, with an enclosure addressed to the countess, waiting for me at the inn. He begged me to give his wife the letter, which would inform her of his plans, and then to bring her to the Ville de Lyon at Amsterdam, where he was staying. He wanted to know how the Englishman whom he had wounded was getting on.

The duty struck me as an amusing one, and I should have laughed with all my heart if I had felt the least desire to profit by the confidence he was pleased to place in me. Nevertheless I went up to the countess, whom I found sitting up in bed playing with Walpole. She read the letter, told me that she could not start till the day following, and informed me what time she would go, as if it had been

all settled; but I smiled sardonically, and told her that my business kept me at the Hague, and that I could not possibly escort her. When Walpole heard me say this he offered to be my substitute, to which she agreed. They set out the day following, intending to lie at Leyden.

Two days after their departure, I was sitting down to dinner with the usual company, increased by two Frenchmen who had just come. After the soup one of them said, coolly,—

"The famous Casanova is now in Holland."

"Is he?" said the other, "I shall be glad to see him, and ask for an explanation which he will not like."

I looked at the man, and feeling certain that I had never seen him before I began to get enraged; but I merely asked the fellow if he knew Casanova.

"I ought to know him," said he, in that self-satisfied tone which is always so unpleasant.

"Nay, sir, you are mistaken; I am Casanova."

Without losing his self-possession, he replied, insolently,—

"You are really very much mistaken if you think you are the only Casanova in the world."

It was a sharp answer, and put me in the wrong. I bit my lips and held my tongue, but I was grievously offended, and determined to make him find the Casanova who was in Holland, and from whom he was going to extract an unpleasant explanation, in

myself. In the meanwhile I bore as well as I could the poor figure I must be cutting before the officers at table, who, after hearing the insolence of this young blockhead, might take me for a coward. He, the insolent fellow, had no scruple in abusing the triumph his answer had given him, and talked away in the most random fashion. At last he forgot himself so far as to ask from what country I came.

"I am a Venetian, sir," I replied.

"Ah! then you are a good friend to France, as your republic is under French protection."

At these words my ill-temper boiled over, and, in the tone of voice one uses to put down a puppy, I replied that the Republic of Venice was strong enough to do without the protection of France or of any other power, and that during the thirteen centuries of its existence it had had many friends and allies but no protectors. "Perhaps," I ended, "you will reply by begging my pardon for not knowing that there was only one Venice in the world."

I had no sooner said this than a burst of laughter from the whole table set me right again. The young blockhead seemed taken aback and in his turn bit his lips, but his evil genius made him strike in again at dessert. As usual the conversation went from one subject to another, and we began to talk about the Duke of Albemarle. The Englishmen spoke in his favour, and said that if he had been alive there would have been no war between England and

France; they were probably right, but even if the duke had lived war might have broken out, as the two nations in question have never yet succeeded in understanding that it is for both their interests to live at peace together. Another Englishman praised Lolotte, his mistress. I said I had seen that charming woman at the Duchess of Fulvi's, and that no one deserved better to become the Countess of Eronville. The Count of Eronville, a lieutenant-general and a man of letters, had just married her.

I had scarcely finished what I had to say when Master Blockhead said, with a laugh, that he knew Lolotte to be a good sort of girl, as he had slept with her at Paris. I could restrain myself no longer; my indignation and rage consumed me. I took up my plate, and made as if I would throw it at his head, saying at the same time, "You infernal liar!" He got up, and stood with his back to the fire, but I could see by his sword-knot that he was a soldier.

Everybody pretended not to hear anything of this, and the conversation went on for some time on indifferent subjects; and at last they all rose from their seats and left the room.

My enemy said to his companion that they would see one another again after the play, and remained by the fire, with his elbow resting on the chimney-piece. I remained at table till the company had all left the room, and when we were alone together I got up and looked him straight in the face, and went out,

walking towards Sheveningue, sure that he would follow me if he were a man of any mettle. When I had got to some distance from the hotel I looked round, and saw that he was following me at a distance of fifty paces.

When I got to the wood I stopped at a suitable place, and stood awaiting my antagonist. He was ten paces off when he drew his sword, and I had plenty of time to draw mine though he came on fast. The fight did not last long, for as soon as he was near enough I gave him a thrust which has never failed me, and sent him back quicker than he came. He was wounded in the chest above the right breast, but as my sword was flat and the opening large enough the wound bled easily. I lowered my sword and ran up to him, but I could do nothing; he said that we should meet again at Amsterdam, if I was going there, and that he would have his revenge. I saw him again five or six years afterwards at Warsaw, and then I did him a kindness. I heard afterwards that his name was Varnier, but I do not know whether he was identical with the president of the National Convention under the infamous Robespierre.

I did not return to the hotel till after the play, and I then heard that the Frenchman, after having the surgeon with him for an hour, had set out for Rotterdam with his friend. We had a pleasant supper and talked cheerfully together without a word being said about the duel, with the exception that an

English lady said, I forget in what connection, that a man of honour should never risk sitting down to dinner at an hotel unless he felt inclined, if necessary, to fight. The remark was very true at that time, when one had to draw the sword for an idle word, and to expose one's self to the consequences of a duel, or else be pointed at, even by the ladies, with the finger of scorn.

I had nothing more to keep me at the Hague, and I set out next morning before before day-break for Amsterdam. On the way I stopped for dinner and recognized Sir James Walpole, who told me that he had started from Amsterdam the evening before, an hour after giving the countess into her husband's charge. He said that he had got very tired of her, as he had nothing more to get from a woman who gave more than one asked, if one's purse-strings were opened wide enough. I got to Amsterdam about midnight and took up my abode at "The Old Bible." The neighbourhood of Esther had awakened my love for that charming girl, and I was so impatient to see her that I could not sleep.

I went out about ten o'clock and called on M. d'O——, who welcomed me in the friendliest manner and reproached me for not having alighted at his house. When he heard that I had given up business he congratulated me on not having removed it into Holland, as I should have been ruined. I did not tell him that I had nearly come to that in France,

as I considered such a piece of information would not assist my designs. . He complained bitterly of the bad faith of the French Government, which had involved him in considerable losses; and then he asked me to come and see Esther.

I was too impatient to embrace her to stay to be asked twice; I ran to greet her. As soon as she saw me she gave a cry of surprise and delight, and threw herself in my arms, where I received her with fondness equal to her own. I found her grown and improved; she looked lovely. We had scarcely sat down when she told me that she had become as skilled in the cabala as myself.

"It makes my life happy," said she, "for it gives me a power over my father, and assures me that he will never marry me to anyone but the man of my choice."

"I am delighted that you extract the only good that can proceed from this idle science, namely, the power to guide persons devoid of strength of will. But your father must think that I taught you the secret?"

"Yes, he does; and he said, one day, that he would forgive me any sacrifices I might have made to obtain this precious secret from you."

"He goes a little farther than we did, my dearest Esther."

"Yes, and I told him that I had gained it from you without any sacrifice, and that now I was a true

Pythoness without having to endure the torments of the tripod; and I am sure that the replies you gave were invented by yourself."

"But if that were so how could I have known where the pocket-book was, or whether the ship was safe?"

"You saw the portfolio yourself and threw it where it was discovered, and as for the vessel you spoke at random; but as you are an honest man, confess that you were afraid of the results. I am never so bold as that, and when my father asks me questions of that kind, my replies are more obscure than a sibyl's. I don't wish him to lose confidence in my oracle, nor do I wish him to be able to reproach me with a loss that would injure my own interests."

"If your mistake makes you happy I shall leave you in it. You are really a woman of extraordinary talents; you are quite unique."

"I don't want your compliments," said she, in a rather vexed manner, "I want a sincere avowal of the truth."

"I don't think I can go as far as that."

At these words, which I pronounced in a serious way, Esther went into a reverie, but I was not going to lose the superiority I had over her, and racked my brains to find some convincing prediction the oracle might make to her, and while I was doing so dinner was announced.

There were four of us at table, and I concluded

that the fourth of the party must be in love with Esther, as he kept his eyes on her the whole time. He was her father's favourite clerk, and no doubt her father would have been glad if she had fallen in love with him, but I soon saw that she was not likely to do so. Esther was silent all through dinner, and we did not mention the cabala till the clerk was gone.

"Is it possible," said M. d'O——, "for my daughter to obtain the answers of the oracle without your having taught her?"

"I always thought such a thing impossible till to-day," I answered, "but Esther has convinced me that I was mistaken. I can teach the secret to no one without losing it myself, for the oath I swore to the sage who taught me forbids me to impart it to another under pain of forfeiture. But as your daughter has taken no such oath, having acquired it herself, she may be for all I know at perfect liberty to communicate the secret to anyone."

Esther, who was as keen as a razor, took care to say that the same oath that I had taken had been imposed on her by the oracle, and that she could not communicate the cabalistic secret to anyone without the permission of her genius, under pain of losing it herself.

I read her inmost thoughts, and was rejoiced to see that her mind was calmed. She had reason to be grateful to me, whether I had lied or not, for

I had given her a power over her father which a father's kindness could not have assured; but she perceived that what I had said about her oracular abilities had been dictated merely by politeness, and she waited till we were alone to make me confess as much.

Her worthy father, who believed entirely in the infallibility of our oracles, had the curiosity to put the same question to both of us, to see if we should agree in the answer. Esther was delighted with the idea, as she suspected that the one answer would flatly contradict the other, and M. d'O—— having written his quesion on two sheets of paper gave them to us. Esther went up to her own room for the operation, and I questioned the oracle on the table at which we had had dinner, in the presence of the father. Esther was quick, as she came down before I had extracted from the pyramid the letters which were to compose my reply, but as I knew what to say as soon as I saw her father read the answer she gave him I was not long in finishing what I had to do.

M. d'O—— asked if he should try to get rid of the French securities he held in spite of the loss he would incur by selling out.

Esther's oracle replied,—

"You must sow plentifully before you reap. Pluck not up the vine before the season of the vintage, for your vine is planted in a fruitful soil."

Mine ran as follows:

"If you sell out you will repent, for there will be a new comptroller-general, who will pay all claims before another year has elapsed."

Esther's answer was conceived in the sibylline style, and I admired the readiness of her wit; but mine went right to the point, and the worthy man embraced us joyfully, and, taking his hat and stick, said that since our replies agreed he would run the risk of losing three million francs and make a profit of five or six hundred thousand in the course of the year. His daughter began to recant, and would have warned him against the danger, but he, who was as firm as a Mussulman, kissed her again, saying,—

"The oracle is not wont to lie, and even if it does deceive me this time it will only be a fourth part of my fortune that I shall lose."

When Esther and I were alone I began to compliment her, much to her delight, on the cleverness of her answer, the elegance of her style, and her boldness, for she could not be as well acquainted with French affairs as I was.

"I am much obliged to you," said she, "for having confirmed my reply, but confess that you lied to please me."

"I confess, since that will please you, and I will even tell you that you have nothing more to learn."

"You are a cruel man! But how could you reply that there would be another comptroller-gen-

eral in a year's time, and run the risk of compromising the oracle? I never dare to say things like that; I love the oracle too well to expose it to shame and confusion."

"That shews that I do not invent the answers; but since the oracle has pronounced it I am willing to bet that Silhouette will be dismissed."

"Your obstinacy drives me to despair, for I shall not rest till I know that I am as much a master of the cabala as you are, and yet you will not confess that you invent the answers yourself. For charity's sake do something to convince me of the contrary."

"I will think it over."

I passed the whole day with this delightful girl, whose amiable disposition and great wealth would have made me a happy man if it were not for my master-passion, the love of independence, and my aversion to make up my mind to live for the rest of my days in Holland.

In the course of my life I have often observed that the happiest hours are often the heralds of misfortune. The very next day my evil genius took me to the Ville de Lyon. This was the inn where Piccolomini and his wife were staying, and I found them there in the midst of a horde of cheats and sharpers, like themselves. As soon as the good people heard my name they rushed forward, some to greet me, and others to have a closer look at me, as if I were some strange wild beast. Amongst those present were

a Chevalier de Sabi, who wore the uniform of a Polish major, and protested he had known me at Dresden; a Baron de Wiedan, claiming Bohemia as his fatherland, who greeted me by saying that his friend the Comte St. Germain had arrived at the Etoile-d'Orient, and had been enquiring after me; an attenuated-looking bravo who was introduced to me as the Chevalier de la Perine, whom I recognized at the first glance as the fellow called Talvis, who had robbed the Prince-Bishop of Presburg, who had lent me a hundred louis the same day, and with whom I had fought a duel at Paris. Finally, there was an Italian named Neri, who looked like a blacksmith minus his honesty, and said that he remembered seeing me one evening at the casino. I recollected having seen him at the place where I met the wretched Lucie.

In the midst of this band of cut-purses I saw the so-called wife of the pretended Chevalier de Sabi, a pretty woman from Saxony, who, speaking Italian indifferently well, was paying her addresses to the Countess Piccolomini.

I bit my lips with anger to find myself in such honourable company, but putting a good face on a bad game I greeted everybody politely, and then drawing a roll of a hundred louis from my pocket I presented them to Master Perine Talvis, telling him I was glad to be able to return them to him with my best thanks.

My politeness did not meet with much of a reception, for the impudent scoundrel answered me, as he pocketed the money, that he remembered having lent it me at Presburg, but he also remembered a more important matter.

"And pray what is that?" said I, in a dry and half-disdainful tone.

"You owe me a revenge at the sword's point, as you know right well. Here is the mark of the gash you gave me seven years ago."

So saying, the wretched little man opened his shirt and shewed the small round scar. This scene, which belonged more to farce than comedy, seemed to have struck all tongues with paralysis.

"Anywhere else than in Holland, where important and delicate business debars me from fighting, I shall be glad to meet you and mark you again, if you still desire to cross swords with me; but while I am here I must beg you not to disturb me. All the same, you may as well know that I never go out without a couple of friends in my pockets, and that if you attack me I shall blow your brains out in self-defence."

"My revenge must be with crossed swords," said he. "However, I will let you finish your business."

"You will do wisely."

Piccolomini, who had been casting a hungry eye upon my hundred louis, proposed immediately

afterwards a bank at faro, and began to deal. Prudence would have restrained me from playing in such company, but the dictates of prudence were overcome by my desire to get back the hundred louis which I had given Talvis, so I cut in. I had a run of bad luck and lost a hundred ducats, but, as usual, my loss only excited me. I wished to regain what I had lost, so I stayed to supper, and afterwards, with better luck, won back my money. I was content to stop at this, and to let the money I had paid to Talvis go, so I asked Piccolomini to pay me, which he did with a bill of exchange on an Amsterdam bank drawn by a firm in Middlesburg. At first I made some difficulty in taking it, on the pretext that it would be difficult to negotiate, but he promised to let me have the money next day, and I had to give in.

I made haste to leave this cut-throat place, after refusing to lend Talvis a hundred louis, which he wanted to borrow of me on the strength of the revenge I owed him. He was in a bad humour, both on this account and because he had lost the hundred louis I had paid him, and he allowed himself to use abusive language, which I treated with contempt. I went to bed, promising myself never to set foot in such a place again.

The next morning, however, I went out with the intention of calling on Piccolomini to get the bill of exchange cashed, but on my way I happened to go into a coffee-house and to meet Rigerboos,

Thérèse's friend, whose acquaintance the reader has already made. After greeting each other, and talking about Thérèse, who was now in London and doing well, I shewed him my bill, telling him the circumstances under which I had it. He looked at it closely, and said,—

"It's a forgery, and the original from which it was copied was honoured yesterday."

He saw that I could scarcely believe it, and told me to come with him to be convinced of the truth of what he said.

He took me to a merchant of his acquaintance, who shewed me the genuine bill, which he had cashed the day before for an individual who was unknown to him. In my indignation I begged Riberboos to come with me to Piccolomini, telling him that he might cash it without remark, and that otherwise he would witness what happened.

We arrived at the count's and were politely received, the count asking me to give him the bill and he would send it to the bank to be cashed, but Rigerboos broke in by saying that it would be dishonoured, as it was a mere copy of a bill which had been cashed the evening before.

Piccolomini pretended to be greatly astonished, and said that, "though he could not believe it, he would look into the matter."

"You may look into it when you please," said

I, "but in the mean time I should be obliged by your giving me five hundred florins."

"You know me, sir," said he, raising his voice, "I guarantee to pay you, and that ought to be enough."

"No doubt it would be enough, if I chose; but I want my money."

At this his wife came in and began to take her part in the dispute, and on the arrival of the count's man, a very cut-throat, Rigerboos took hold of me by the arm and drew me forcibly away. "Follow me," said he, when we were outside, "and let me see to this business myself." He took me to a fine-looking man, who turned out to be the lieutenant of police, and after he had heard the case he told me to give him the bill of exchange and to say where I was going to dine. I told him I should be at M. d'O——'s, and saying that would do he went off. I thanked Rigerboos, and went to Esther, who reproached me tenderly for not having been to see her the evening before. That flattered me, and I thought her a really charming girl.

"I must take care," said I, "not to see you every day, for your eyes have a sway over me that I shall not be able to resist much longer."

"I shall believe as much of that as I choose, but, by-the-by, have you thought of any way of convincing me?"

"What do you want to be convinced about?"

"If it be true that there is in your cabala an intelligence distinct from your own you ought to be able to find some way of proving it to me."

"That is a happy thought; I will think it over."

At that moment her father came in from the Exchange, and we sat down to dinner.

We were at dessert when a police official brought me five hundred florins, for which I gave him a receipt.

When he had gone I told my entertainers what had happened the evening before and in the morning, and the fair Esther reproached me for preferring such bad company to her. "By way of punishment," said she, "I hope you will come with me to the theatre this evening, though they are going to give a Dutch play, of which you will not understand a word."

"I shall be near you, and that is enough for me."

In fact, I did not comprehend a word of the actors' gibberish, and was terribly bored, as Esther preserved a solemn and serious silence the whole time.

As we were coming from the theatre she told me all about the piece with charming grace and wonderful memory; she seemed to wish to give me some pleasure in return for the tedium to which she had condemned me. When we got home we had supper, and that evening, Heaven be thanked! I heard nothing more about the cabala. Before we

parted, Esther and her father made me promise to dine with them every day, and to let them know if anything prevented my coming.

Next morning, about eight o'clock, while I was still dressing, I suddenly saw Piccolomini standing before me, and as he had not sent in his name I began to feel suspicious. I rang the bell for my faithful Spaniard, who came in directly.

"I want to speak to you privately," said he, "tell that fellow to go out."

"He can stay," I answered, "he does not know a word of Italian." Le Duc, of course, knew Italian perfectly well.

"Yesterday, about noon," he began, "two men came into my room. They were accompanied by the inn-keeper, who served as interpreter. One of the men asked me if I felt inclined to cash there and then a forged bill of exchange, which I had given the night before, and which he held in his hands. As I gave no reply, he told me that there was no time for consideration or argument; I must say yes or no there and then, for such were their instructions from the chief of police. I had no choice in the matter, so I paid the five hundred florins, but I did not get back the bill, and the man told me I could not have it unless I told the police the name of the person from whom I got it, as, in the interests of commerce, the forger must be prosecuted. My reply was that I could not possibly tell them what they wanted,

as I had got it of a stranger who had come into my room while I was holding a small bank of faro, to pass the time.

"I told him that after this person (who I had thought introduced by someone in the company) had gone, I found to my surprise that nobody knew him; and I added that if I had been aware of this I would not only have refused the bill but would not have allowed him to play. Thereupon the second policeman said that I had better find out who this person was, or else I should be considered as the forger and prosecuted accordingly; after this threat they went out.

"In the afternoon my wife called on the chief of police and was politely received, but after hearing what she had to say he informed her that she must find out the forger, since M. Casanova's honour might be endangered by the banker taking proceedings against him, in which case he would have to prosecute me.

"You see in what a difficult position we are placed, and I think you ought to try to help us. You have got your money and you are not without friends. Get their influence exerted in the matter, and we shall hear no more about it. Your interests as well as mine are concerned."

"Except as a witness of the fact," I answered, "I can have nothing to do with this affair. You agree that I received the bill from you, since you

cashed it; that is enough for me. I should be glad to be of service to you, but I really don't see what I can do. The best advice I can give you is to make a sacrifice of the rascally sharper who gave you the forged bill, and if you can't do that I would counsel you to disappear, and the sooner the better, or else you may come to the galleys, or worse."

He got into a rage at this, and turning his back on me went out, saying I should be sorry for what I had said.

My Spaniard followed him down the stair and came back to tell me that the *signor* had gone off threatening vengeance, and that, in his opinion, I would do well to be on my guard.

"All right," said I, "say no more about it."

All the same I was really very grateful for his advice, and I gave the matter a good deal of thought.

I dressed myself and went to see Esther, whom I had to convince of the divinity of my oracle, a difficult task with one whose own wits had told her so much concerning my methods. This was the problem she gave me to solve,—

"Your oracle must tell me something which I, and only I, know."

Feeling that it would be impossible to fulfil these conditions, I told her that the oracle might reveal some secret she might not care to have disclosed.

"That is impossible," she answered, "as the secret will be known only to myself."

"But if the oracle replies I shall know the answer as well as you, and it may be something you would not like me to know."

"There is no such thing, and, even if there were, if the oracle is not your own brain you can always find out anything you want to know."

"But there is some limit to the powers of the oracle."

"You are making idle excuses; either prove that I am mistaken in my ideas or acknowledge that my oracle is as good as yours."

This was pushing me hard, and I was on the point of declaring myself conquered when a bright idea struck me.

In the midst of the dimple which added such a charm to her chin Esther had a little dark mole, garnished with three or four extremely fine hairs. These moles, which we call in Italian *neo, nei,* and which are usually an improvement to the prettiest face, when they occur on the face, the neck, the arms, or the hands, are duplicated on the corresponding parts of the body. I concluded, therefore, that Esther had a mole like that on her chin in a certain place which a virtuous girl does not shew; and innocent as she was I suspected that she herself did not know of this second mole's existence. "I shall astonish her," I said to myself, "and establish

my superiority in a manner which will put the idea of having equal skill to mine out of her head for good." Then with the solemn and far-away look of a seer I made my pyramid and extracted these words from it,—

"Fair and discreet Esther, no one knows that at the entrance of the temple of love you have a mole precisely like that which appears on your chin."

While I was working at my calculations, Esther was leaning over me and following every movement. As she really knew as much about the cabala as I did she did not want it to be explained to her, but translated the numbers into letters as I wrote them down. As soon as I had extracted all the combinations of numbers from the pyramid she said, quietly, that as I did not want to know the answer, she would be much obliged if I would let her translate the cypher.

"With pleasure," I replied. "And I shall do so all the more willingly as I shall thereby save your delicacy from sharing with me a secret which may or may not be agreeable. I promise you not to try to find it out. It is enough for me to see you convinced."

"I shall be convinced when I have verified the truth of the reply."

"Are you persuaded, dearest Esther, that I have had nothing to do with framing this answer?"

"I shall be quite sure of it if it has spoken the

truth, and if so the oracle will have conquered, for the matter is so secret a one that even I do not know of it. You need not know yourself, as it is only a trifle which would not interest you; but it will be enough to convince me that the answers of your oracle are dictated by an intelligence which has nothing in common with yours."

There was so much candour and frankness in what she said that a feeling of shame replaced the desire of deceiving her, and I shed some tears, which Esther could only interpret favourably to me. Nevertheless, they were tears of remorse, and now, as I write after such a lapse of years, I still regret having deceived one so worthy of my esteem and love. Even then I reproached myself, but a pitiable feeling of shame would not let me tell the truth; but I hated myself for thus leading astray one whose esteem I desired to gain.

In the mean time I was not absolutely sure that I had hit the mark, for in nature, like everything else, every law has its exceptions, and I might possibly have dug a pitfall for myself. On the other hand, if I were right, Esther would no doubt be convinced for the moment, but her belief would speedily disappear if she chanced to discover that the correspondence of moles on the human body was a necessary law of nature. In that case I could only anticipate her scorn. But however I might tremble I

had carried the deception too far, and could not draw back.

I left Esther to call on Rigerboos, whom I thanked for his offices on my behalf with the chief of the police. He told me that I had nothing to fear from Piccolomini in Holland, but all the same he advised me not to go about without pistols. "I am on the eve of embarking for Batavia," said he, "in a vessel which I have laden with the ruins of my fortune. In the state my affairs are in I thought this the best plan. I have not insured the cargo, so as not to diminish my profits, which will be considerable if I succeed. If the ship is taken or wrecked I shall take care not to survive its loss; and after all I shall not lose much."

Poor Riberboos said all this as if he were jesting, but despair had no doubt a good deal to do with his resolve, since it is only in great misery that we despise both life and fortune. The charming Thérèse Trenti, whom Rigerboos always spoke of as Our Lady, had contributed to his ruin in no small degree. She was then in London, where, by her own account, she was doing well. She had exchanged the name of Trenti for that of Cornelis, or Cornely, which, as I found out afterwards, was Rigerboos's real name. We spent an hour in writing to this curious woman, as we desired to take advantage of the circumstance that a man whom Riberboos desired to commend to her was shortly going to Eng-

land. When we had finished we went sleighing on the Amstel, which had been frozen over for several days. This diversion, of which the Dutch are very fond, is, to my thinking, the dullest imaginable, for an objectless journey is no pleasure to me. After we were well frozen we went to eat oysters, with Sillery, to warm ourselves again, and after that we went from one casino to another, not intending to commit any debauchery, but for want of something better to do; but it seemed decreed that whenever I preferred any amusement of this kind to the charms of Esther's society I should come to grief.

I do not know how it happened, but as we were going into one of these casinos Rigerboos called me loudly by my name, and at that instant a woman, such as one usually finds in these places, came forward and began to gaze at me. Although the room was ill enough lighted I saw it was the wretched Lucie, whom I had met a year before without her recognizing me. I turned away, pretending not to know her, for the sight of her was disagreeable to me, but in a sad voice she called me by my name, congratulating me on my prosperity and bewailing her own wretchedness. I saw that I could neither avoid her nor repulse her without inhumanity, so I called to Rigerboos to come upstairs and the girl would divert us by recounting the history of her life.

Strictly speaking, Lucie had not become ugly; one could still see that she had been a beautiful

woman; but for all that her appearance inspired me with terror and disgust. Since the days when I had known her at Pasean, nineteen years of misery, profligacy, and shame had made her the most debased, the vilest creature that can be imagined. She told us her story at great length; the pith of it might be expressed in six lines.

The footman who had seduced her had taken her to Trieste to lie in, and the scoundrel lived on the sale of her charms for five or six months, and then a sea captain, who had taken a fancy to her, took her to Zante with the footman, who passed for her husband.

At Zante the footman turned soldier, and deserted the army four years after. She was left alone and continued living on the wages of prostitution for six years; but the goods she had to offer lowering in value, and her customers being of the inferior kind, she set out for England with a young Greek girl, whom an English officer of marines treated as his wife, and whom he abandoned in the streets of London when he got tired of her. After living for two or three years in the vilest haunts in London, Lucie came to Holland, where, not being able to sell her own person any longer, she became a procuress—a natural ending to her career. Lucie was only thirty-three, but she was the wreck of a woman, and women are always as old as they look.

While she told her history she emptied two

bottles of Burgundy I had ordered, and which neither I nor my friend touched. Finally, she told us she was now supported by two pretty girls whom she kept, and who had to give her the half of what they got.

Rigerboos asked her, jokingly, if the girls were at the casino.

"No," said she, "they are not here, and shall never come here, for they are ladies of high birth, and their uncle, who looks after their interests, is a Venetian gentleman."

At this I could not keep back my laughter, but Lucie, without losing countenance, told me that she could only repeat the account they had given of themselves, that if we wanted to be convinced we had only to go and see them at a house she rented fifty paces off, and that we need not be afraid of being disturbed if we went, as their uncle lived in a different part of the town.

"Oh, indeed!" said I, "he does not live with his high-born nieces, then?"

"No, he only comes to dinner to hear how business has been going, and to take all the money from them."

"Come along," said Rigerboos, "we will go and see them."

As I was desirous of seeing and addressing the noble Venetian ladies of so honourable a profession, I told Lucie to take us to the house. I knew very

well that the girls were impostors, and their gentleman-uncle a blackguard; but the die was cast.

We found them to be young and pretty. Lucie introduced me as a Venetian, and they were beside themselves with joy to have someone to whom they could talk. I found out directly that they came from Padua, not Venice, as they spoke the Paduan dialect, which I knew very well. I told them so, and they confessed it was the truth. I asked the name of their uncle, but they said they could not tell me.

"We can get on without knowing," said Rigerboos, catching hold of the one he liked best. Lucie brought in some ham, oysters, a pie, and a good many bottles of wine, and then left us.

I was not in the humour for wantonness, but Rigerboos was disposed to be merry; his sweetheart was at first inclined to be prudish on his taking liberties with her, but as I began to follow his example the ladies relaxed their severity; we went first to one and then the other, and before long they were both in the state of Eve before she used the fig-leaf.

After passing an hour in these lascivious combats we gave each of the girls four ducats, paid for the provisions we had consumed, and sent six louis to Lucie. We then left them, I going to bed cross with myself for having engaged in such brutal pleasures.

Next morning I awoke late and in a bad humour, partly from the debauch of the night before (for profligacy depresses as well as degrades the mind) and partly from the thought that I had neglected Esther, who had unquestionably been grieved by my absence. I felt that I must hasten to reassure her, feeling certain that I should find some excuses to make, and that they would be well received. I rang for Le Duc, put on my dressing-gown, and sent him for my coffee. He had scarcely left the room when the door opened and I saw Perine and the fellow named Wiedan, whom I had seen at Piccolomini's, and who styled himself a friend of St. Germain. I was sitting on my bed, putting on my stockings. My apartments consisted of three fine rooms, but they were at the back of the house, and all the noise I could have made would not have been heard. The bell was on the other side of the room; Le Duc would be gone fully ten minutes, and I was in imminent danger of being assassinated without the possibility of self-defence.

The above thoughts flashed through my head with lightning speed, and all that I could do was to keep calm and say,—

"Well, gentlemen, what can I do for you?" Wiedan took upon himself to answer me.

"Count Piccolomini has found himself forced to declare that he received the forged bill from us,

in order that he may escape from the difficult position in which your denunciation placed him. He has warned us that he is going to do so, and we must escape forthwith if we want to avoid prosecution. We have not a penny; we are desperate men."

"Well, gentlemen, what have I to do with that?"

"Give us four hundred florins immediately; we do not want more, but we must have that much, and now. If you refuse we will take to flight with everything of yours that we can lay our hands on; and our arguments are these."

With this, each man drew a pistol from his pocket and aimed it at my head.

"You need not have recourse to violence," said I, "it can only be fatal to you. Stay, here are a hundred ducats, more than you asked. Begone, and I wish you a pleasant journey, but I would not be here when my servant comes back if I were you."

Wiedan took the roll of money with a trembling hand and put it in his pocket without examining it; but Perine came up, and praising my noble generosity, would have put his arms around my neck and kissed me. I repulsed him, but without rudeness, and they went their ways, leaving me very glad to have rid myself of them at so cheap a rate.

As soon as I was out of this snare I rang my bell, not to have them followed but that I might get dressed as quickly as possible. I did not say a word to Le Duc about what had happened, I was

silent even to my landlord; and, after I had sent my Spaniard to M. d'O—— to excuse my dining there that day, I went to the chief of police, but had to wait two hours before I could see him. As soon as the worthy man had heard my account of my misfortune he said he would do his best to catch the two rascals, but he did not conceal from me his fears that it was already too late.

I took the opportunity of telling him of Piccolomini's visit to me, his claims and threats. He thanked me for doing so, and promised to see to it; but he advised me for the future to be on my guard and ready to defend myself in case I was attacked before he could place my enemies in a place where they could do me no harm.

I hastened home again, as I felt ill. An acid taste in my mouth shewed me how all these shocks had upset me; but I knew what to do. I took a strong glass of lemonade, which made me bring up a good deal of bile, and I then felt much better.

Towards evening I went to see Esther, and found her looking serious and rather vexed; but as soon as she saw how pale I was her face lighted up, and she asked me, in a voice of tenderest interest, if I had been ill. I told her I had been out of sorts, that I had taken some medicine, and that I now felt better.

"You will see my appetite at supper," added I,

to calm her fears, "I have had nothing to eat since dinner yesterday."

This was really the truth, as I had only eaten a few oysters with the Paduan girls.

She could scarcely contain her joy at my recovery, and bade me kiss her, with which request I complied gladly, all unworthy though I felt of so great a favour.

"I am going to tell you an important piece of news," said she, "and that is that I am sure that you do not invent the answers to your oracle, or at least that you only do so when you choose. The reply you procured me was wonderful—nay, divine, for it told me of a secret unknown to all, even to myself. You may imagine my surprise when I convinced myself, with no little trouble, of the truth of the answer.

"You possess a treasure, your oracle is infallible; but surely it can never lie, and my oracle tells me that you love me. It makes me glad to know that, for you are the man of my heart. But I want you to give me an exemplary proof of your love, and if you do love me you will not hesitate to do so. Stay, read the reply you got me; I am sure you do not know what it says; then I will tell you how you can make me quite happy."

I pretended to read, and kissed the words which declared I loved her. "I am delighted," said I, "that the oracle has convinced you so easily, but I

must be excused if I say that I believe you knew as much long ago." She replied, blushing, that if it were possible to shew me the object in question I should not wonder at her ignorance. Then, coming to the proof of my love, she told me that she wanted me to communicate the secret to her. "You love me," said she, "and you ought to make no difficulty in assuring the bliss of a girl who will be your wife, and in your power. My father will agree to our marriage, and when I become your wife I will do whatever you please. We will even go and live in another country if that would add to your happiness. But you must teach me how to obtain the answer to any question without inventing it myself."

I took Esther's hands in mine; she inspired me with the tenderest feelings, and I kissed her hands with respectful fervour, saying, "You know, Esther, dear, that my word is passed at Paris. Certainly, Manon is not to be compared to you; but for all that I gave my promise to her poor mother, and I must keep it."

A sigh escaped from Esther, and her head fell upon her breast: but what could I do? I could not teach her any other way of consulting the oracle than the method she understood as well as I: my superiority over her only consisting in my greater craft and more extensive experience.

Early one morning, two or three days later, a

man was announced as wanting to see me. He called himself an officer, but his name was perfectly unknown to me. I sent down to say that I could not see him, and as soon as my Spaniard went out I locked my door. What had happened already had made me suspicious, and I did not care to see any more gentlemen alone. The two scoundrels who had robbed me had eluded all the snares of the police, and Piccolomini was not to be found; but I knew a good many of the gang were still in Amsterdam, and I thought it well to be on my guard.

Some time after, Le Duc came in with a letter written in bad Italian, saying that it had been given him by an officer who was waiting for an answer. I opened it, and recognized the name I had heard a short while ago. The writer said we knew each other, but that he could only give his true name with his own lips, and that he had important information to give me.

I told Le Duc to shew him in, and to stay by the door. I saw enter a well-made man of about forty, dressed in the uniform of an officer of I do not know what army, and bearing on his countenance all the marks of an escaped gallows'-bird.

"What can I do for you, sir?" said I, as soon as he entered.

"Sir, we knew each other at Cerigo, sixteen or seventeen years ago, and I am delighted to have an opportunity of renewing the acquaintance."

I knew that I had spent but a few minutes at Cerigo, on my way to Constantinople, and concluded that my visitor must be one of the unfortunate wretches to whom I gave alms.

"Are you the man," I said, "who told me that you were the son of a Count Peccini, of Padua, although there is no such count in Padua at all?"

"I congratulate you on your excellent memory," said he, coolly, "I am that very individual."

"Well, what do you want with me now?"

'I can't divulge my business in the presence of your servant."

"My servant does not understand Italian, so you can speak out; however, if you like, I will send him away."

I ordered Le Duc to stay in the ante-chamber, and when he had left the room my Paduan count told me that I had been with his nieces, and had treated them as if they were courtezans, and that he was come to demand satisfaction.

I was tired of being cheated, and I took hold of my pistols and pointed them at him, bidding him be gone instantly. Le Duc came in and the third robber took himself off, muttering that " a time would come."

I was placed in a disagreeable position; if I wanted to prosecute, I should have to tell the whole story to the police. I thought of my honour and determined to be silent, and the only person to whom

I mentioned the matter was Rigerboos, who not being in the same position as myself took his measures, the result of which was that Lucie had to send her high-born dames about their business. But the wretched woman came to me to say that this misfortune had plunged her into the deepest distress, so I made her a present of a few ducats, and she went away somewhat consoled. I begged her not to call on me again.

Everything I did when I was away from Esther seemed to turn out ill, and I felt that if I wanted to be happy I should do well to keep near her; but my destiny, or rather my inconstancy, drew me away.

Three days afterwards, the villainous Major Sabi called on me to warn me to be on my guard, as, according to his account, a Venetian officer I had insulted and refused to give satisfaction to had vowed vengeance against me.

"Then," said I, "I shall have him arrested as an escaped galley slave, in which character I have given him alms, and for wearing without the right to do so the uniform of an officer, thereby disgracing the whole army. And pray what outrage can I have committed against girls who live in a brothel, and whom I have paid according to their deserts?"

"If what you say is true you are quite right, but this poor devil is in a desperate situation; he wants to leave the country, and does not possess a single florin. I advise you to give him an alms once more,

and you will have done with him. Two score florins will not make you any the poorer, and will rid you of a villainous enemy."

"A most villainous one, I think." At last I agreed to give him the forty florins, and I handed them to him in a coffee-house where the major told me I should find him. The reader will see how I met this blackguard four months later.

Now, when all these troubles have been long over and I can think over them calmly, reflecting on the annoyances I experienced at Amsterdam, where I might have been so happy, I am forced to admit that we ourselves are the authors of almost all our woes and griefs, of which we so unreasonably complain. If I could live my life over again, should I be wiser? Perhaps; but then I should not be myself.

M. d'O—— asked me to sup with him at the Burgomasters' Lodge, and this was a great distinction, for, contrary to the rules of Freemasonry, no one but the twenty-four members who compose the lodge is admitted, and these twenty-four masons were the richest men on the Exchange.

"I have told them that you are coming," said M. d'O——, "and to welcome you more honourably the lodge will be opened in French." In short, these gentlemen gave me the most distinguished reception, and I had the fortune to make myself so agreeable to them that I was unanimously chosen an honorary member during the time I should stay at Amsterdam.

As we were going away, M. d'O—— told me that I had supped with a company which represented a capital of three hundred millions.

Next day the worthy Dutchman begged me to oblige him by answering a question to which his daughter's oracle had replied in a very obscure manner. Esther encouraged me, and I asked what the question was. It ran as follows:

"I wish to know whether the individual who desires me and my company to transact a matter of the greatest importance is really a friend of the King of France?"

It was not difficult for me to divine that the Comte de St. Germain was meant. M. d'O—— was not aware that I knew him, and I had not forgotten what M. d'Afri had told me.

"Here's a fine opportunity," thought I, "for covering my oracle with glory, and giving my fair Esther something to think about."

I set to work, and after erecting my pyramid and placing above the four keys the letters O, S, A, D, the better to impose on Esther, I extracted the reply, beginning with the fourth key, D. The oracle ran as follows:

"The friend disavows. The order is signed. They grant. They refuse: All vanishes. Delay."

I pretended to think the reply a very obscure one, but Esther gave a cry of astonishment and declared that it gave a lot of information in an extra-

ordinary style. M. d'O——, in an ecstacy of delight, exclaimed,—

"The reply is clear enough for me. The oracle is divine; the word 'delay' is addressed to me. You and my daughter are clever enough in making the oracle speak, but I am more skilled than you in the interpretation thereof. I shall prevent the thing going any futher. The project is no less a one than to lend a hundred millions, taking in pledge the diamonds of the French crown. The king wishes the loan to be concluded without the interference of his ministers and without their even knowing anything about it. I entreat you not to mention the matter to anyone."

He then went out.

"Now," said Esther, when we were by ourselves, "I am quite sure that that reply came from another intelligence than yours. In the name of all you hold sacred, tell me the meaning of those four letters, and why you usually omit them."

"I omit them, dearest Esther, because experience has taught me that in ordinary cases they are unnecessary; but while I was making the pyramid the command came to me to set them down, and I thought it well to obey."

"What do they mean?"

"They are the initial letters of the holy names of the cardinal intelligences of the four quarters of the world."

"I may not tell you, but whoever deals with the oracle should know them."

"Ah! do not deceive me; I trust in you, and it would be worse than murder to abuse so simple a faith as mine."

"I am not deceiving you, dearest Esther."

"But if you were to teach me the cabala, you would impart to me these holy names?"

"Certainly, but I cannot reveal them except to my successor. If I violate this command I should lose my knowledge; and this condition is well calculated to insure secrecy, is it not?"

"It is, indeed. Unhappy that I am, your successor will be, of course, Manon."

"No, Manon is not fitted intellectually for such knowledge as this."

"But you should fix on someone, for you are mortal after all. If you like, my father would give you the half of his immense fortune without your marrying me."

"Esther! what is it that you have said? Do you think that to possess you would be a disagreeable condition in my eyes?"

After a happy day—I think I may call it the happiest of my life—I left the too charming Esther, and went home towards the evening.

Three or four days after, M. d'O—— came into Esther's room, where he found us both calculating pyramids. I was teaching her to double, to triple,

and to quadruple the cabalistic combinations. M. d'O—— strode into the room in a great hurry, striking his breast in a sort of ecstacy. We were surprised and almost frightened to see him so strangely excited, and rose to meet him, but he running up to us almost forced us to embrace him, which we did willingly.

"But what is the matter, papa dear?" said Esther, "you surprise me more than I can say."

"Sit down beside me, my dear children, and listen to your father and your best friend. I have just received a letter from one of the secretaries of their high mightinesses informing me that the French ambassador has demanded, in the name of the king his master, that the Comte St. Germain should be delivered over, and that the Dutch authorities have answered that His Most Christian Majesty's requests shall be carried out as soon as the person of the count can be secured. In consequence of this the police, knowing that the Comte St. Germain was staying at the Etoile d'Orient, sent to arrest him at midnight, but the bird had flown. The landlord declared that the count had posted off at nightfall, taking the way to Nimeguen. He has been followed, but there are small hopes of catching him up.

"It is not known how he can have discovered that a warrant existed against him, or how he continued to evade arrest."

"It is not known," went on M. d'O——, laughing, "but everyone guesses that M. Calcoen, the same that wrote to me, let this friend of the French king's know that he would be wanted at midnight, and that if he did not get the key of the fields he would be arrested. He is not so foolish as to despise a piece of advice like that. The Dutch Government has expressed its sorrow to M. d'Afri that his excellence did not demand the arrest of St. Germain sooner, and the ambassador will not be astonished at this reply, as it is like many others given on similar occasions.

"The wisdom of the oracle has been verified, and I congratulate myself on having seized its meaning, for we were on the point of giving him a hundred thousand florins on account, which he said he must have immediately. He gave us in pledge the finest of the crown diamonds, and this we still retain. But we will return it to him on demand, unless it is claimed by the ambassador. I have never seen a finer stone.

"And now, my children, you see what I owe to the oracle. On the Exchange the whole company can do nothing but express their gratitude to me. I am regarded as the most prudent and most far-seeing man in Holland. To you, my dear children, I owe this honour, but I wear my peacock's feathers without scruple.

"My dear Casanova, you will dine with us, I

hope. After dinner I shall beg you to enquire of your inscrutable intelligence whether we ought to declare ourselves in possession of the splendid diamond, or to observe secrecy till it is reclaimed."

After this discourse papa embraced us once more and left us.

"Sweetheart," said Esther, throwing her arms round my neck, "you have an opportunity for giving me a strong proof of your friendship. It will cost you nothing, but it will cover me with honour and happiness."

"Command me, and it shall be done. You cannot think that I would refuse you a favour which is to cost me nothing, when I should deem myself happy to shed my blood for your sake."

"My father wishes you to tell him after dinner whether it will be better to declare that they have the diamond or to keep silence till it is claimed. When he asks you a second time, tell him to seek the answer of me, and offer to consult the oracle also, in case my answer may be too obscure. Then perform the operation, and I will make my father love me all the better, when he sees that my knowledge is equal to yours."

"Dearest one, would I not do for thee a task a thousand times more difficult than this to prove my love and my devotion? Let us set to work. Do you write the question, set up the pyramids, and inscribe with your own hand the all-powerful initials.

Good. Now begin to extract the answer by means of the divine key. Never was a cleverer pupil!"

When all this had been done, I suggested the additions and subtractions I wanted made, and she was quite astonished to read the following reply: "Silence necessary. Without silence, general derision. Diamond valueless; mere paste."

I thought she would have gone wild with delight. She laughed and laughed again.

"What an amazing reply!" said she. "The diamond is false, and it is I who am about to reveal their folly to them. I shall inform my father of this important secret. It is too much, it overwhelms me; I can scarcely contain myself for joy! How much I owe you, you wonderful and delightful man! They will verify the truth of the oracle immediately, and when it is found that the famous diamond is but glittering paste the company will adore my father, for it will feel that but for him it would have been covered with shame, by avowing itself the dupe of a sharper. Will you leave the pyramid with me?"

"Certainly; but it will not teach you anything you do not know." The father came in again and we had dinner, and after the dessert, when the worthy d'O—— learnt from his daughter's oracle that the stone was false, the scene became a truly comical one. He burst into exclamations of astonishment, declared the thing impossible, incredible, and at last begged me to ask the same question, as

he was quite sure that his daughter was mistaken, or rather that the oracle was deluding her.

I set to work, and was not long in obtaining my answer. When he saw that it was to the same effect as Esther's, though differently expressed, he had no longer any doubts as to his daughter's skill, and hastened to go and test the pretended diamond, and to advise his associates to say nothing about the matter after they had received proofs of the worthlessness of the stone. This advice was, as it happened, useless; for though the persons concerned said nothing, everybody knew about it, and people said, with their usual malice, that the dupes had been duped most thoroughly, and that St. Germain had pocketed the hundred thousand florins; but this was not the case.

Esther was very proud of her success, but instead of being satisfied with what she had done, she desired more fervently every day to possess the science in its entirety, as she supposed I possessed it.

It soon became known that St. Germain had gone by Emden and had embarked for England, where he had arrived in safety. In due time we shall hear some further details concerning this celebrated impostor; and in the meanwhile I must relate a catastrophe of another kind, which was near to have made me die the death of a fool.

It was Christmas Day. I had got up early in the morning in better spirits than usual. The old

women tell you that always presages misfortune, but I was as far then as I am now from making my happiness into an omen of grief. But this time chance made the foolish belief of good effect. I received a letter and a large packet from Paris; they came from Manon. I opened the letter and I thought I should have died of grief when I read,—

"Be wise, and receive the news I give you calmly. The packet contains your portrait and all the letters you have written to me. Return me my portrait, and if you have kept my letters be kind enough to burn them. I rely on your honour. Think of me no more. Duty bids me do all I can to forget you, for at this hour to-morrow I shall become the wife of M. Blondel of the Royal Academy, architect to the king. Please do not seem as if you knew me if we chance to meet on your return to Paris."

This letter struck me dumb with astonishment, and for more than two hours after I read it I was, as it were, bereft of my senses. I sent word to M. d'O—— that, not feeling well, I was going to keep my room all day. When I felt a little better I opened the packet. The first thing to fall out was my portrait. I looked at it, and such was the perturbation of my mind, that, though the miniature really represented me as of a cheerful and animated expression, I thought I beheld a dreadful and a threatening visage. I went to my desk and wrote and

tore up a score of letters in which I overwhelmed the faithless one with threats and reproaches.

I could bear no more; the forces of nature were exhausted, and I was obliged to lie down and take a little broth, and court that sleep which refused to come. A thousand designs came to my disordered imagination. I rejected them one by one, only to devise new ones. I would slay this Blondel, who had carried off a woman who was mine and mine only; who was all but my wife. Her treachery should be punished by her losing the object for whom she had deserted me. I accused her father, I cursed her brother for having left me in ignorance of the insult which had so traitorously been put upon me.

I spent the day and night in these delirious thoughts, and in the morning, feeling worse than ever, I sent to M. d'O—— to say that I could not possibly leave my room. Then I began to read and re-read the letters I had written to Manon, calling upon her name in a sort of frenzy; and again set myself to write to her without finishing a single letter. The emptiness of my stomach and the shock I had undergone began to stupefy me, and for a few moments I forgot my anguish only to re-awaken to acuter pains soon after.

About three o'clock, the worthy M. d'O—— came to invite me to go with him to the Hague, where the chief masons of Holland met on the day

following to keep the Feast of St. John, but when he saw my condition he did not press me to come.

"What is the matter with you, my dear Casanova?" said he.

"I have had a great grief, but let us say no more about it."

He begged me to come and see Esther, and left me looking almost as downcast as I was. However, the next morning Esther anticipated my visit, for at nine o'clock she and her governess came into the room. The sight of her did me good. She was astonished to see me so undone and cast down, and asked me what was the grief of which I had spoken to her father, and which had proved too strong for my philosophy.

Sit down beside me, Esther dear, and allow me to make a mystery of what has affected me so grievously. Time, the mighty healer, and still more your company, will effect a cure which I should in vain seek by appealing to my reason. Whilst we talk of other things I shall not feel the misfortune which gnaws at my heart."

"Well, get up, dress yourself, and come and spend the day with me, and I will do my best to make you forget your sorrow."

"I feel very weak; for the last three days I have only taken a little broth and chocolate."

At these words her face fell, and she began to weep.

After a moment's silence she went to my desk, took a pen, and wrote a few lines, which she brought to me. They were:

"Dear, if a large sum of money, beyond what my father owes you, can remove or even soothe your grief I can be your doctor, and you ought to know that your accepting my treatment would make me happy."

I took her hands and kissed them affectionately, saying,—

"No, dear Esther, generous Esther, it is not money I want, for if I did I would ask you and your father as a friend: what I want, and what no one can give me, is a resolute mind, and determination to act for the best."

"Ask advice of your oracle."

I could not help laughing.

"Why do you laugh?" said she, "if I am not mistaken, the oracle must know a remedy for your woes."

"I laughed, dearest, because I felt inclined to tell you to consult the oracle this time. As for me I will have nothing to do with it, lest the cure be worse than the disease."

"But you need not follow your advice unless you like it."

"No, one is free to act as one thinks fit; but not to follow the advice of the oracle would be a contempt of the intelligence which directs it."

Esther could say no more, and stood silent for several minutes, and then said that if I liked she would stay with me for the rest of the day. The joy which illumined my countenance was manifest, and I said that if she would stay to dinner I would get up, and no doubt her presence would give me an appetite. "Ah!" said she, "I will make you the dish you are so fond of." She ordered the sedan-chairs to be sent back, and went to my landlady to order an appetising repast, and to procure the chafing-dish and the spirits of wine she required for her own cooking.

Esther was an angel, a treasure, who consented to become mine if I would communicate to her a science which did not exist. I felt that I was looking forward to spending a happy day; this shewed me that I could forget Manon, and I was delighted with the idea. I got out of bed, and when Esther came back and found me on my feet she gave a skip of pleasure. "Now," said she, "you must oblige me by dressing, and doing your hair as if you were going to a ball."

"That," I answered, "is a funny idea, but as it pleases you it pleases me."

I rang for Le Duc, and told him I wanted to have my hair done, and to be dressed as if I were going to a ball. "Choose the dress that suits me best."

"No," said Esther, "I will choose it myself."

Le Duc opened my trunk, and leaving her to rummage in it he came to shave me, and to do my hair. Esther, delighted with her task, called in the assistance of her governess. She put on my bed a lace shirt, and the suit she found most to her taste. Then coming close, as if to see whether Le Duc was dressing my hair properly, she said,—

"A little broth would do you good; send for a dish, it will give you an appetite for dinner."

I thought her advice dictated by the tenderest care, and I determined to benefit by it. So great was the influence of this charming girl over me, that, little by little, instead of loving Manon, I hated her. That gave me courage, and completed my cure. At the present time I can see that Manon was very wise in accepting Blondel's offer, and that my love for self and not my love for her was wounded.

I was in my servant's hands, my face turned away towards the fire, so that I could not see Esther, but only divert myself with the idea that she was inspecting my belongings, when all at once she presented herself with a melancholy air, holding Manon's fatal letter in her hand.

"Am I to blame," said she, timidly, "for having discovered the cause of your sorrow?"

I felt rather taken aback, but looking kindly at her, I said,—

"No, no, my dear Esther; pity your friend, and say no more about it."

"Then I may read all the letters?"

"Yes, dearest, if it will amuse you."

All the letters of the faithless Manon Baletti to me, with mine to her, were together on my table. I pointed them out to Esther, who began to read them quite eagerly.

When I was dressed, as if for some Court holiday, Le Duc went out and left us by ourselves, for the worthy governess, who was working at her lace by the window, looked at her lace, and nothing else. Esther said that nothing had ever amused her so much as those letters.

"Those cursed epistles, which please you so well, will be the death of me."

"Death? Oh, no; I will cure you, I hope."

"I hope so, too; but after dinner you must help me to burn them all from first to last."

"Burn them! No; make me a present of them. I promise to keep them carefully all my days."

"They are yours, Esther. I will send them to you to-morrow."

These letters were more than two hundred in number, and the shortest were four pages in length. She was enchanted to find herself the possessor of the letters, and she said she would make them into a parcel and take them away herself.

"Shall you send back the portrait to your faithless mistress?" said she.

"I don't know what to do with it."

"Send it back to her; she is not worthy of your honouring her by keeping it. I am sure that your oracle would give you the same advice. Where is the portrait? Will you shew it me?"

I had the portrait in the interior of a gold snuff-box, but I had never shewn it to Esther for fear she should think Manon handsomer than herself, and conclude that I only shewed it her out of vanity; but as she now asked to see it I opened the box where it was and gave it her.

Any other woman besides Esther would have pronounced Manon downright ugly, or have endeavoured at the least to find some fault with her, but Esther pronounced her to be very beautiful, and only said it was a great pity so fair a body contained so vile a soul.

The sight of Manon's portrait made Esther ask to see all the other portraits which Madame Manzoni had sent me from Venice. There were naked figures amongst them, but Esther was too pure a spirit to put on the hateful affectations of the prude, to whom everything natural is an abomination. O-Murphy pleased her very much, and her history, which I related, struck her as very curious. The portrait of the fair nun, M—— M——, first in the habit of her order and afterwards naked, made her laugh, but I would not tell Esther her story, in spite of the lively desire she displayed to hear it.

At dinner-time a delicate repast was brought to us, and we spent two delightful hours in the pleasures of a conversation and the table. I seemed to have passed from death to life, and Esther was delighted to have been my physician. Before we rose from table I had declared my intention of sending Manon's portrait to her husband on the day following, but her good nature found a way of dissuading me from doing so without much difficulty.

Some time after, while we were talking in front of the fire, she took a piece of paper, set up the pyramids, and inscribed the four keys O, S, A, D. She asked if I should send the portrait to the husband, or whether it would not be more generous to return it to the faithless Manon. Whilst she was calculating she said over and over again, with a smile, "I have not made up the answer." I pretended to believe her, and we laughed like two augurs meeting each other alone. At last the reply came that I ought to return the portrait, but to the giver, since to send it to the husband would be an act unworthy of a man of honour.

I praised the wisdom of the oracle, and kissed the Pythoness a score of times, promising that the cabala should be obeyed implicitly, adding that she had no need of being taught the science since she knew it as well as the inventor.

I spoke the truth, but Esther laughed, and,

fearing lest I should really think so, took pains to assure me of the contrary.

It is thus that love takes his pleasure, thus his growth increases, and thus that he so soon becomes a giant in strength.

"Shall I be impertinent," said Esther, "if I ask you where your portrait is? Manon says in her letter that she is sending it back; but I don't see it anywhere."

"In my first paroxysm of rage, I threw it down; I don't know in what direction. What was thus despised by her cannot be of much value to me."

"Let us look for it; I should like to see it."

We soon found it on my table, in the midst of a pile of books; Esther said it was a speaking likeness.

"I would give it you if such a present were worthy of you."

"Ah! you could not give me anything I would value more."

"Will you deign to accept it, Esther, though it has been possessed by another?"

"It will be all the dearer to me."

At last she had to leave me, after a day which might be called delightful if happiness consists of calm and mutual joys without the tumultuous raptures of passion. She went away at ten, after I had promised to spend the whole of the next day with her.

After an unbroken sleep of nine hours' duration I got up refreshed and feeling once more in perfect health, and I went to see Esther immediately. I found she was still abed and asleep, but her governess went and roused her in spite of my request that her repose should be respected.

She received me with a sweet smile as she sat up in bed, and shewed me my voluminous correspondence with Manon on her night-table, saying that she had been reading it till two o'clock in the morning.

Her appearance was ravishing. A pretty cambric night-cap, tied with a light-blue ribbon and ornamented with lace, set off the beauties of her face; and a light shawl of Indian muslin, which she had hastily thrown on, veiled rather than concealed her snowy breast, which would have shamed the works of Praxiteles. She allowed me to take a hundred kisses on her rosy lips—ardent kisses which the sight of such charms made yet more ardent; but her hands forbade my approach to those two spheres I so longed to touch.

I sat down by her and told her that her charms of body and mind would make a man forget all the Manons that ever were.

"Is your Manon fair to see all over?" said she.

"I really can't say, for, not being her husband, I never had an opportunity of investigating the matter."

"Your discretion is worthy of all praise," she said, with a smile, "such conduct becomes a man of delicate feeling."

"I was told by her nurse that she was perfect in all respects, and that no mote or blemish relieved the pure whiteness of her skin."

"You must have a different notion of me?"

"Yes, Esther, as the oracle revealed to me the great secret you desired to know. Nevertheless, I should find you perfect in all your parts."

Hereupon I was guilty of a stupidity which turned to my confusion. I said,—

"If I became your husband, I could easily refrain from touching you there."

"I suppose you think," said she, blushing, and evidently a little vexed, "that if you touched it your desires might be lessened?"

This question probed me to the core and covered me with shame. I burst into tears, and begged her pardon in so truly repentant a voice that sympathy made her mingle her tears with mine. The incident only increased our intimacy, for, as I kissed her tears away, the same desires consumed us, and if the voice of prudence had not intervened, doubtless all would have been over. As it was, we had but a foretaste and an earnest of that bliss which it was in our power to procure. Three hours seemed to us as many minutes. She begged me to go into her sitting-room while she dressed, and we then went down and dined

with the wretched secretary, who adored her, whom she did not love, and who must have borne small love to me, seeing how high I stood in her graces.

We passed the rest of the day together in that confidential talk which is usual when the foundations of the most intimate friendship have been laid between two persons of opposite sex, who believe themselves created for each other. Our flames burnt as brightly, but with more restraint, in the dining-room as in the bedroom. In the very air of the bedroom of a woman one loves there is something so balmy and voluptuous that the lover, asked to choose between this garden of delights and Paradise, would not for one moment hesitate in his choice.

We parted with hearts full of happiness, saying to each other, "Till to-morrow."

I was truly in love with Esther, for my sentiment for her was composed of sweeter, calmer, and more lively feelings than mere sensual love, which is ever stormy and violent. I felt sure I could persuade her to marry me without my first teaching her what could not be taught. I was sorry I had not let her think herself as clever as myself in the cabala, and I feared it would be impossible to undeceive her without exciting her to anger, which would cast out love. Nevertheless, Esther was the only woman who would make me forget Manon, whom I began to think unworthy of all I had proposed doing for her.

M. d'O—— came back and I went to dine with

him. He was pleased to hear that his daughter had effected a complete cure by spending a day with me. When we were alone he told me that he had heard at the Hague that the Comte St. Germain had the art of making diamonds which only differed from the real ones in weight, and which, according to him, would make his fortune. M. d'O—— would have been amused if I had told him all I knew about this charlatan.

Next day I took Esther to the concert, and while we were there she told me that on the day following she would not leave her room, so that we could talk about getting married without fear of interruption. This was the last day of the year 1759.

END OF VOL. V.